



# PROGRESS AND PREJUDICE VOLUME 3



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# Progress and prejudice Volume 3

Gore, Mrs. (Catherine  
Grace Frances), 1799-1861

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# PROGRESS AND PREJUDICE.

BY MRS. GORE.

"Albof, with hermit eye, I scan  
The present deeds of present man"

COLERIDGE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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## PROGRESS AND PREJUDICE.

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### CHAPTER I.

AT the appointed moment, Lady Davenport and her daughter quitted Ilford Castle with the deepest regret. For it was no longer the Ilford of other days. It sent no more prize cattle to the Smithfield show; nor claimed premiums for uneatable poultry.—But thanks to the subdivision of farms and allotments of land to the new cottages, contentment, which follows successful industry like its shadow, was beginning to establish itself where “curses



not loud but deep" had been overheard for the last half century by the recording angel.

But it was not alone because the place afforded them such interesting and healthful occupation, that they dreaded to leave it. In London, they must be in a great measure deprived of the society of that best of sons and brothers, <sup>\*</sup> who was now their constant companion; seeking their aid and counsel not only in his domestic arrangements, but in his plans for bettering the condition of the hundreds of human beings committed to his guardianship.

In London, a home awaited them darkened by painful reminiscences. Even the prospect of rejoining the beloved companion of her youth, the widow and child of her lost brother, did not reconcile Lady Davenport to the idea of the gloomy drawing-room in Spring Gardens, with its mournful associations with her departed husband and banished son.

She said nothing to Hugh upon the subject. For he was one of those who seem to hold the charter of life on the privilege of averting every grievance from the paths of his fellow-creatures; and she feared he would sympathise too painfully in her uneasy feelings.

But on arriving in New Street, she saw how insufficiently she had estimated his kindliness of heart.—The family mansion of Hugh, Lord Davenport, retained scarcely a vestige of the family mansion of his predecessor.—It was to watch over the progress of its metamorphosis, that he had visited London in November; and now, all was as perfect as could be desired to welcome the best of mothers.—Brick had become stone, and gloom cheerfulness. No more dark corners. No more ill-ventilated rooms.—The old official-seeming library, furnished with oak and dark green velvet, opened through a small conservatory into the park; and the meagre den once apportioned to its present



lord, was not only enriched by the treasures of art removed from Captain Davenport's lodgings, but lavishly supplied with all the inventions by which modern luxury endeavours to enervate the manhood of our soldiers, and hardihood of our fox-hunters.

But it was in the drawing-rooms that Lord Davenport's taste had been chiefly exercised. An entrance had been opened between them, divided only by *portières*; and glossy chintz supplied the place of faded damask.—Musical instruments of the first order were provided for Olivia; new book-cases, supplied with all the meritorious books of the day, for his mother. Nothing sumptuous,—nothing showy. All was pleasant for use; all calculated to efface, from the mind of Lady Davenport and her daughter, the impression that their present airy domicile had anything in common with their sombre dungeon of old.

Even old Madame Winkelried had her little

snuggery : with a bracket for her mealy old canary, and a hob for her ever-simmering cup of lime-flower tea.

One only thing was wanting, and that, alas ! was beyond the compass of Lord Davenport to obtain ;—the presence of Marcus. And it was in the deserted room of the truant that his mother and sister found a pretext for the tears sacred to reminiscences of the past ; those indelible traces, which neither paper-hangers nor upholsterers ever yet wholly effaced.

“ Marcus *ought* to have been here,” said Olivia, as they all three sat together over their wine and chestnuts, with the cloth, for the first time in that dining-room, unremoved,—“ to introduce us to-morrow to the dear Cousin Amy of whom he used to be so fond.”

“ Nature is surely a sufficient Master of the Ceremonies where the tie of kinship is so close,” replied her brother.

“ And you forget,” sighed Lady Davenport, “ that Amy’s mother, at least, is no stranger.



For five long years, we were never an hour apart."

And as she involuntarily reverted to the approaching reunion of two hearts between which the waters of strife had so long been interposing, as roaring waves now disunite the congenital shores of England and France, it was impossible not to recur to the lines of Coleridge, so prized by Scott and Byron, but now hackneyed by perpetual citation,—

They stood aloof, the scars remaining,  
Like cliffs which had been rent asunder ;  
A dreary sea now flows between,  
But neither heat, nor frost, nor thunder,  
Shall wholly do away, I ween,  
The marks of that which once hath been.

They had parted young, blooming, sanguine, full of trust in human nature. They were about to meet, worn by long-suffering, distrustful, discouraged not only by the influence of the past, but by misgivings

touching the future welfare of their children. The blossoms on the Tree of Life had fallen ; the half-developed fruit seemed already sickening.

When they met on the morrow, however, the lapse of time was for a moment forgotten. They were in each other's arms ; they were again Mary and Gertrude ;—they were the mothers of promising children, who were, to each other, as near of kin as exists short of brother and sisterhood.

How much they had mutually to confide !— Yet so it was that the lips of both were sealed ! —Neither could relate domestic troubles in which the nearest and dearest to the other had exercised so large a part.

Between Amy and Olivia, however, there existed no such drawback. *They met sans peur et sans reproche* ; with, as utter an incapability of evil feeling or evil thought, as between two flowers blooming side by side in the sunshine. An additional year of worldly

experience imparted to Amy something of a graver aspect than was perceptible with the child-like fairness of Olivia Davenport ; invested by education with the *naïveté* which, in German nature, is compatible with the highest order of intellectual cultivation. Olivia's joys and griefs called forth her tears and smiles as spontaneously as the hours on the dial are revealed by a sunbeam:—and she fancied she could not too often express to her new cousin how warmly she was prepared to love her ;—how favourably she had been described to them by Marcus ;—and how eagerly her brother Hugh desired to make her acquaintance.—

Amy said less in return. She trusted perhaps less largely than of old to cousinly enthusiasm.

“ Hugh did not see you when he visited Aunt Meadows in the autumn ? ” said she. “ You were ill or absent,—ill, probably, for I am sure you never leave your sick mother.”

Amy remembered only too bitterly the cause



which confined her to her room during the visit of her Cousin Hugh.

“But now, we shall be constantly together,” resumed the affectionate girl. “The mourning which keeps strangers out of our house, will only bring *us* closer together—You do not know,—you cannot believe—how often I and my brothers have talked over all this, and how I have looked forward to this happy day!”

It was impossible to acknowledge such overtures with less than an affectionate embrace; and the two mothers seemed to see their own youth revived in the mutual cordiality of their children.

“Amy, darling,” said Lady Meadows, when the mother and daughter were once more alone together, “do you remember, at Meadows Court, sighing after a cousin or two,—a Lucy and Nancy Selby,—to make friends of, and correspondents?”

“I do,—I do!—Just when poor Miss Honey-

wood left us, and I was beginning to fancy myself a little lonely."

"You are satisfied *now*, then, my child?—Two cousins of your own age—"

"And two *such* cousins!" interrupted Amy, —so kind,—so beautiful,—so clever."

"So different too, that their several claims on your friendship will not clash."

"I think, mamma, I shall love Olivia most; but most admire and respect my Cousin Mary."

"No need to compare them,—no need to analyse," replied Lady Meadowes. "The affection arising from natural ties should never be searchingly examined.—By handling the butterfly too closely, the lustre of its beautiful wings is brushed away."

A few days afterwards, Lady Davenport came to fetch her invalid sister-in-law to pass the day with them in Spring Gardens: and, for the first time, Amy was introduced into the

interior of a first-rate London house.—Neither Meadows Court nor Radensford Manor afforded her the remotest idea of what is to be effected for domestic comfort by the union of wealth and good taste. Everything she saw delighted her. But what gratified her most was the solicitude for the well-being of his family evinced by her Cousin Hugh.

By a mere chance, Lord Davenport was absent ; having profited by his Parliamentary Wednesday holiday, to visit some farms in Buckinghamshire,—the only portion of his estates which, since his accession to his fortune, he had left unexamined.—But his absence was not regretted. They felt more completely at home together, for the absence of broad-cloth from their little circle.—Amy was introduced to Marcus's pleasant back-room, that she might admire the celebrated Himalayan landscape, of which his family were so proud.

“ Beautiful,—most beautiful ! ” exclaimed Miss Meadows, standing entranced before one



of the noblest delineations of mountain scenery she had ever beheld.—“This must be the picture which my Cousin Mary saw at Captain Davenport’s house, and described as so admirable !”

Olivia, a little surprised that any female cousin of her cousin should have been a visitor at her brother’s lodgings, paused a moment; then, too courteous to express her wonder, reverted to Mark.

“He was so fond of you, Amy !” said she. “Do you know I used sometimes to feel a little jealous, when he was talking about you. I was afraid he was beginning to love you better than myself. For *I* was only his sister by birth-right,—*you* by election.—I fancied I should have better liked to be the chosen one !”

So perhaps thought poor Amy.—But the chosen one of Mark was neither sister nor cousin.

“It seems so strange, does it not, his never writing to us ?—” resumed Olivia. “*He*, so

devoted to my mother,—so kind to *me*!—  
Something seems to have changed him in a  
moment.—Hugh endeavours to cheer us by  
assurances that he *must* return in April. On  
the plea of ill-health, he has paired off till then.  
But afterwards, his parliamentary duties will  
imperatively recal him.”

“He may perhaps resign his seat,” said Amy  
Meadowes, in a low voice, still examining the  
picture.

“I think not. He would do nothing to give  
pain to Davenport, who has set his whole heart  
upon Marcus’s success in the House.”

Amy said no more.—She had not found  
Captain Davenport easily swayed to a purpose  
on which others had set their hearts, unless it  
happened to square with his own.—He was not  
the man to sacrifice himself or his inclinations.  
—But she allowed Olivia to prattle on, un-  
checked, in his praise.

There was one person, however, with whom  
Amy Meadowes often found herself in company

who seldom neglected an opportunity of disparaging this absent cousin:—her Uncle Hargood.—Perhaps because, under his sister's roof, he was tired of hearing Aristides called the Just; perhaps because anxious that no one should imagine him capable of regretting the loss of an aristocratic son-in-law; perhaps because his vocation, which now hung upon his shoulders like second nature,—or a little, perhaps, like the robe of Nessus,—inspired him with an irretrievable habit of criticism; perhaps,—tell it not in Gath, nor even whisper it in Soho,—perhaps because his nature had just been scarified by passing through the savage ordeal of Christmas bills:—that epoch when the gap which defies the best endeavours of people of small and precarious incomes to make both ends meet, is so apt to neutralise the promises of peace and goodwill towards men, which ought to sanctify the primal festival of the Christian year.

Certain it was that the arrival in town of the



Davenports and the frequent mention of their name he was compelled to hear, stirred up bitterness in his soul. It is true that in consequence of their claims on his sister, he saw much less of her. She was often in Spring Gardens. The carriage of Lady Davenport, whom he scrupulously avoided meeting, was stationed at the door whenever he called in Golden Square; her ladyship's two tall footmen in their mourning suits, stationed there like mutes, to dignify the funeral of its departed sociability.—His republican spirit—that is, the spirit which he fancied was republican,—chafed against this display.—He fancied that his sister had too easily abdicated her self-respect, by snatching at the tardy olive-branch tendered by “these aristocrats.” And he used to go home after his disappointment of a chat with her, as mortified as poor Oliver Goldsmith when he saw public attention diverted from him by a company of dancing dogs.

“Sprighted by a fool,” in the person of Hamilton Drewe, whose officious patronage not even the brutality of Hargood could extinguish after he had ascertained, according to his own romantic version of the fact, “by how charming a Miranda the solitude of Prospero was lightened,” and irritated to find his leniency towards his sister’s past offences lost in the blaze of Lady Davenport’s earnest attachment, he would go home and reproach poor Mary with the staleness of his bread or toughness of his mutton chops;—the unpunctuality of the laundress or smallness of the coals;—as if *he* were Lear, and herself the Goneril who grudged and diminished the quality of his meagre entertainment.

On such occasions, Mary answered him never a word.—She would have scorned to be taunted out of her self-government by a father who, in addition to the spirit-wearing duty of grinding his bones and brains to make their bread, was

undergoing the humiliation so galling to a proud spirit, of being dunned by the botching tailor who supplied clothes to his boys.

But though patient and resigned, she never allowed herself to soothe his perturbed spirit by joining in his diatribes against the aristocratic pretensions of the Davenports. She *would* not be the confederate of his injustice.—Conscious of the happy influence exercised over her own somewhat rugged nature by the mildness of Lady Meadows and sweetness of Amy, she admitted that the courtesy of high-breeding was only a grace the more superadded to solid virtues. As to believing that her aunt or cousin loved her a jot the less because they were the frequent guests of a nobler family with which they were as closely connected as with herself, she would as soon have suspected them of petty larceny.—But she grieved over her father's prejudice against the Davenports less as a source of disunion between the families,



than as an evidence of pitiable narrowness of mind.

Mary heard without a pang her Cousin Amy's praises of the family.—She could not be jealous of *them* as she had been when she found herself robbed of her birthright, by her father's momentary preference of Amy. It pleased her to hear of their sayings and doings:—of the zeal with which old Madame Winkelried had undertaken to overlook the German lessons given by Olivia to Miss Meadows;—of the fondness testified towards Amy by her Cousin Hugh, who had adopted her at once as a second sister, and brought home no *cadeau* for Olivia, unless accompanied with a facsimile for her cousin.

It is true that, not being an eye-witness of his perfectly straightforward attentions, Mary Hargood fell into the mistake which, for a moment, misled the not very perspicacious mind of Lady Meadows;—that Lord Daven-

port was not unlikely to repay by an attachment to the daughter, the injuries which his father had wantonly inflicted on the mother.— But there was no indication on Amy's part of sharing their error. She was charmed with her Cousin Hugh; with his humanity,—his nobleness,—his amenity.—She accepted his gifts with gratitude; and would thankfully have called him brother.—But the cry of her heart was still like that of Cocotte—  
“ Marcus,—Marcus !”

## CHAPTER II.

“TELL me, my dear Davenport,” said Lord Curt de Cruxley, throwing himself, uninvited, on the red-morocco cushion of a window-seat in the lobby of the House of Lords, where the young peer sat waiting for the close of one of those replies to a reply signifying nothing, as regarded the charge against Government, which was extending the dreary waste of a heavy debate; “who were those two beautiful creatures in your mother’s carriage, this morning, when it was stopping at Maurigy’s hotel?”

“Is Lady Curt de Cruxley in small health’ that you make the inquiry with so much emotion?” replied Lord Davenport, not a little amused by the springy vivacity of the grey haired *bel esprit*.

“No! I ask the question in behalf of my son and heir, who will soon be in the remove.”

“One of the beautiful creatures, then, was my sister, not yet out; the other, if it was not my sister’s old German governess, must have been Miss Meadows.”

“*What* Meadows? Anything to an old horror of a Sir Jervis Meadows, a Bedfordshire neighbour of ours, who commands our detestable militia; the last of the Pipeclays, and greatest of bores,—who can’t address one without my-lording one like a tinker?”

“I have not much acquaintance among tinkers,” said Davenport, laughing, “Sir Jervis is my distant cousin. You, who might go up for examination in Lodge’s Peerage, ought to know that my mother was a Meadows.



The angel you are bespeaking for your son, is her niece."

"I wish you would give it me all in writing. Pedigrees, whether of man or horse, wear my memory to tatters. But what has all this to do with some swampery—Meadowes Marsh or Meadowes Spring,—I forget what,—that Billy Eustace has hired on the banks of the Severn?"

"If you mean Meadowes *Court*, in Gloucestershire, it was the seat of my late uncle Sir Mark Meadowes, and is now the property of his heir-at-law, Sir Jervis."

"True, very true. One keeps forgetting these things," said Lord Curt,—a man who never forgot anything, except himself. "Eustace has been horribly cut up by an escapade in his immaculate family. One of those well-drilled daughters of Lady Louisa's, to escape from the maternal rattan, eloped lately with something in a fustian jacket and leather gaiters!"

"I was in hopes the story was exaggerated," said Lord Davenport. "Lady Louisa and my mother are old friends; and the Eustaces are people whose intentions are far better than their judgment."

"Which is saying little for their intentions. To my thinking, they are people who ought to be suppressed by act of parliament: or at all events, condemned to hard labour *à perpétuité* at their family seat.—If chimneys can be made to consume their own smoke, why should not counties be made to consume their own bores?"

"William Eustace, so far from being a bore, is—"

"A prig of the first magnitude. Granted! We were all sorry for him, however, when this sister of his stooped to dilute the blood of all the Eustaces with ditch-water. As to himself, poor fellow, he seems to have disguised himself in his queerest mackintosh, and taken the longest line to be found in his Bradshaw.

For he has never been heard of since the event."

"It is true, I have not seen so much as his card since I returned to town," said Lord Davenport, musingly.

"I never touch a card!" was his companion's rejoinder,—in the mincing tone of an elderly spinster, pressed to the whist-table.—"But I saw Billy, t'other day :—where was it?—buying a benefit-ticket for Exeter Hall,—or cheapening tracts at Rivingtons',—or early clover-seed at the Agricultural Society,—or committing some other of the outrages that become a country-gentleman."

"Surely," said Davenport, "he spoke the other night on the Game-law Question?"

"In the interests, of course, of his new brother-in-law!"

"Don't be merciless, Curt. Remember you have daughters of your own!"

"I wish I could forget it.—But as *my* daughters are not immured from the society

of gentlemen and ladies, *they* are accustomed to regard gamekeepers *et hoc* in the same light as sheep or oxen."

"*Ne gages pas.*—'Frailty, thy name is woman!'" replied Davenport, recalling to mind how, at one of Lord Curt's concerts, he had noticed the singular intimacy between Sophronia Curt, and a handsome young Venetian Tenor.

"How goes the debate?—Who's up?" suddenly demanded the honourable Sophronia's father, catching the sleeve of one of a couple of elderly gentlemen, who, at that moment went chuckling past.

"Lord Rumbleman's up,—and Burnsey is to follow.—He's gone to ginger himself with a glass or two of sherry, and if you mean to hear him, Curt, I advise you to quadruple the dose," said the sleeve-held man, shaking off his interruptor.

"There go two political swindlers, if ever there lived one since the days of Sir Robert



Walpole!" ejaculated Curt, as they proceeded along the lobby. "Confederates in jobbery, who back each other's accommodation-bills, to raise the public wind! One forges the lie against Government, which t'other endorses; and both, though honest men in private life, consider any amount of roguery meritorious, that purports to unseat the administration.—How are you, my dear duke!—When did you come to town?—

To show our eyes and grieve our heart,  
Come like a slow coach,—so depart,—

added he, in a stage whisper, as his Grace after having shaken his extended finger, rolled ponderously on, like a mountain in labour. "Ha! Madgman! How are you?—Pilled, I'm sorry to hear, at Brookes's!—Your own fault, my dear fellow!—You ought to have had your name up three years ago, while you were still a dark horse,—instead of a detected ass," added

he, in the same *àpart* tone, when the young Viscount had nodded and disappeared.

For some minutes more did the epigrammatic Curt extend his pleasant observations to friend and foe; sporting with the most malicious scandals, as the serpent-charmers of Egypt, or bathers at Schlangenbad, twist asps in playful coils round their fingers.

But Lord Davenport, who had no taste for such pastimes, rose from his seat, to avoid further "asides," and made his way into the body of the House.

A few days after this conversation, the young lord, on entering Lady Meadows's drawing-room, to confer with her touching some family news he had just learned from his mother, found seated beside her work-table, a grave or rather severe-looking man, who, after surveying him with a scrutinising eye, but no acknowledgment or salutation, took up his hat abruptly; and with a slight nod to the lady of the house, prepared to leave the room.

A glance of surprise towards Lady Meadows, produced by the uncourteousness of the stranger, induced her to whisper in explanation :  
“My brother,—Mr. Hargood.”

Lord Davenport started up ; and, in a moment, was between the retreating gentleman and the door.

“I owe you a thousand excuses for not remembering your features, Mr. Hargood,” said he :—“for which this,” pointing to the eye-glass at his button-hole, “must be my apology :—I am very near-sighted. We have met before, in a public, if not private capacity.”

Hargood, surveying him with much such an expression as his Puritan ancestor may have worn while addressing one of the malignants of Charles Stuart, made a scarcely perceptible inclination of the head.

“If I might take so great a liberty on so slight an acquaintance,” resumed Lord Davenport, still cutting off the retreat of the surly

fugitive, "I would venture to request you and your daughter to partake of a family dinner with Lady Meadows and my Cousin Amy on Wednesday next. My plea for such an invitation without the formal preliminary of a visit to your house, is having just heard with great regret, from my mother, that Lady Meadows is on the point of leaving town.— You will naturally wish to see the most of our friends during the short remnant of their stay."

"I flatter myself, my lord," replied Hargood, stiffly, "that the arguments I have been using with my sister will suffice to deter her from this projected visit to Radensford." Saying which, he returned towards the place he had quitted, as if to satisfy himself of the issue of the debate.

"No, brother,—my plans are fully settled," replied Lady Meadows, with a gentle yet determined countenance. — "I will, if you please, make my nephew umpire in the case."



“Do not expect to find me an upright judge,” replied Lord Davenport, cheerfully, “on any question that involves the loss of your society.”

“I *do* expect it,—nay, I am certain of it, my dear Hugh,” replied his aunt.—“My brother cannot be persuaded that my intended visit to Radensford Rectory has not its origin in a natural yearning after the neighbourhood in which I spent so many happy years.—That I long to see dear Meadows Court again, it would be idle to deny. Still less that, after an absence of nearly a year and a half from the *real* country, I do not feel that Amy and myself would be the better for its restorative influences.”

“Mere nonsense,” muttered Hargood. “To revive associations, better forgotten!—Your health was always ailing at Meadows Court!”

Her nephew was disposed to listen more patiently to the end of her ladyship’s explana-

tions; and it was to him, consequently, she now addressed them.

“I received yesterday, my dear Hugh, a letter from our friend, Mrs. Burton, written in great affliction. Her only child has been condemned by the Brighton physicians, unless she can be immediately transported to a milder climate; and they are to depart in the next Peninsular steamer for the coast of Spain.”

“Far better remain quietly at home. Change of climate never yet cured a consumptive patient,” pronounced Hargood, with the self-constituted authority of a President of the College of Physicians.

“Mrs. Burton’s father, who was on the point of joining her at Brighton, will thus be left alone in his rectory.—You do not know this father, Hugh; or you would understand the urgency of his claims upon me.—Inquire of your mother what Mr. Henderson was, even during her girlhood at Meadowes Court. But the interim of thirty years has converted all

that was excellent into all that is venerable ; and during that interim, what has he not been to me !—Instructor, protector, pastor, friend ! —From the day of Amy's birth, he seemed to love her as his child ; and from the trying moment of my husband's death, became a guardian to us both.—He is now considerably past fourscore,—infirm and feeble ; and, long accustomed to the watchfulness of a female companion, his daughter's absence would, I am sure, prove fatal to him, unless I accepted the duty she has charged me with, to fill her place at the Rectory.—Can I refuse ?”

“ Certainly *not*,” was Lord Davenport's unhesitating reply. “ Go, dearest aunt, and God speed your errand.—I have not a word to urge against it.”

Hargood remained contemptuously silent.—His over-rational view of the things of this life suggested that beneficed clergymen long past fourscore are better disposed of sleeping in their chancels, than in their pulpits ;—and

that Mr. Henderson's housekeeper would administer his camomile tea and water gruel, quite as punctually as Dame Mary Meadows.

“And since that point is settled,” continued Lord Davenport, having been rewarded by a grateful smile from his aunt, “I trust, Mr. Hargood, you will concede to my previous request. Lady Meadows, who disposes of my mother's carriage, will I am sure be delighted to call for you and Miss Hargood, on their way to Spring Gardens.”

This good-natured offer,—regarded by Hargood as a piece of impertinent patronage, lest a hack cab should be seen driving up to his lordship's aristocratic residence,—decided the matter. Already afraid of incurring the suspicion of ceding too readily to patrician influence, his stubbornness now took the alarm. Up went the bristles of his pride.—All his former approval of Lord Davenport's character and abilities vanished *in fumo*. He saw in him



only a lord :—a lord whom it was in his power to mortify.

“Neither my daughter nor myself, my lord, ever dine out,” said he, again drawing towards the door. “We have duties which do not allow us the disposal of our time. Your lordship will be pleased to accept my thanks, and my excuses.”

After Hargood’s final exit, Lord Davenport, with an air of vexation, resumed his place by Lady Meadows.

“A forgiving disposition, I am sorry to see, dear aunt, is not universal in your family,” was his only comment. “Mr. Hargood still owes us a grudge.”

“You mistake him, I fancy. You mistake him, *I hope*. But my brother is a man of strong prejudices ; and it would be difficult to persuade him that persons of his class and yours ever meet without an abdication of dignity on both sides.—Nay, not without real injury ; like the encounter of the iron and

earthen pot, in which the frailer vessel is sure to suffer."

"I don't think he had much to fear, either from myself, my mother, or little Olivia," said Lord Davenport, laughing.—"However, a wilful man must have his way. A wilful woman, too, I'm afraid:—since, in spite of all our prayers, you leave us so soon as Thursday next—Well, well,—I will say no more. I admit, though reluctantly, that for once your obstinacy is praiseworthy."

Throughout the remainder of the morning, however, after completing his arrangements with Lady Meadows, Lord Davenport kept recurring with deep regret to the discourtesy of Hargood.—He had it deeply at heart to obtain a second view of the striking girl who had made so deep an impression on his mind. But independently of Mary, he set a due value on Hargood himself; as a mine of information, and a man on whose word, as a public journalist, implicit reliance might be placed. Lord Daven-

port had not been moving for the last ten years in even a lower walk of political life, without appreciating the value of this distinction. He was aware that, as regards those whose eyes are ever fixed upon governmental machinery, and whose pens are perpetually pointed to record its movements,

Old experience doth attain  
To something like prophetic vein ;

and, however distasteful to him the *brusquerie* of Hargood's manners, he felt that his counsel might often prove invaluable.

Moved either by the first or second of these considerations, he left a card the following day at his door ;—too delicate and conscientious to attempt to force an entrance during the absence of the master of the house, like his impetuous brother, or the tactless Hamilton Drewe.

If his overtures were met with tolerable civility, he intended to renew his attempt at drawing the Hargoods to his house. But pre-

viciously to taking any further steps, he determined to refer the question to his dearest friend and best adviser,—his excellent mother.

In relating his story, he concealed nothing.—Most men who seek advice, unless from their lawyer or physician, reserve some single point which invalidates the counsel they receive —But Hugh was too honest and too wise for any weakness of the kind; and the result was that Lady Davenport was equally ingenuous.

“Nothing have I more at heart,” said she, “than that you should marry, the moment you find a wife to your mind. But there are few I should more dislike for a daughter-in-law, than Mr. Hargood’s daughter. Not for her own sake,—for I have heard the highest praise of her from Amy and her mother. Not because she is a professional artist; for beyond the small circle of her family, that circumstance has never transpired. But on account of her father’s odious temper, and despicable prejudices. It was entirely Mr. Hargood’s hot-headed in-

terference that inspired my poor mother and your father with their unreasonable detestation of the whole family."

"I can say little, alas ! in praise of his manners or disposition," replied her son. "Hargood is not improved since the days you speak of. The angry boy of twenty, has become the surly man of fifty.—He has learned and forgotten nothing ; not having mixed enough in society to have his prejudices pummiced down by the friction of the world."

"At the same time," returned his mother, "so deeply,—so *very* deeply,—am I impressed with the necessity of perfect sympathy of character to insure the happiness of married life, that, had you seen enough of Mary Hargood, my dear son, to feel certain of your preference, I would overlook every obstacle and welcome her warmly as a daughter-in-law."

"I have had but a glimpse of her,—enough to decide me that her person is all I most



admire. But if countenance,—if voice,—if deportment,—go for anything, Mary Hargood's disposition must be as faultless as her style of beauty is noble."

"Trust not to specious appearances, my dearest Hugh."

"I do *not*, mother," cried he; "for which reason, I am here to consult you. I may not find the wife of my choice in Lady Meadows's niece. But in what is called society,—that is, in my own class of life,—I have sought and sought, and met with nothing but disgusts."

"Yet several times, since you left Oxford, I have fancied you what is called in love?"

"Often,—oftener perhaps than you are aware of. I am no stoic, to be proof against the spells of a lovely face or winning manner.—But what has been the result?—That I have followed these charmers from ball-room to ball-room, through those detestable wife-markets of the London season which almost put to shame

the slave-markets it has cost us so many millions to suppress ; till I have blushed for myself and the objects of my pursuit.—What have I found, mother, in those stifling mobs, to reward me for submitting to be elbowed, suffocated, and wearied out of all patience?—Insidious platitudes or audacious bantering, from those in whom I was seeking a gentle intelligent companion for my fireside !—Be just, dear mother. Can these over-dressed dolls, whose sole object in life seems to be to whirl about, night after night, in over-lighted, overheated rooms, be expected to subside at once into rational beings,—into wives and mothers,—devoted like myself to a country life?—I could not,—no, I *could* not, entrust my honour and happiness to the keeping of such giddy puppets !”

Lady Davenport answered only by a sigh.

“ Whereas a girl accustomed from childhood to rational pursuits, and prepared by a life of duty and industry to find enjoyment even in

enfranchisement from care, is likely to be both happy and grateful."

"You would not surely, dearest son, be loved as a benefactor?"

"Far rather than be accepted as the *gros lot* of a lottery won by some flirting girl,—the hack of the London ball-rooms."

"But where lies the necessity for such an alternative?" said Lady Davenport, gravely.

"The truth is, mother," added her son, "you have spoiled me for female companionship. And you, so reasonable, so domestic, so patient, so affectionate, were married from the school-room.—*You* never ran the gauntlet of May Fair flirtations, or the whispers of the crush-room! Even thus, would I choose my wife. And even thus would I fain commit Olivia, undefiled in ear and eye, to the safe keeping of her husband. Such was my motive for introducing so readily, last year, William Eustace to our fireside."

"Have you seen him lately?" inquired Lady

Davenport, considering perhaps that they had insisted long and largely enough on his matrimonial projects.

“Not once this season. This unfortunate business in his family,—this unlucky *mésalliance*,—has probably disinclined him to appear in society.”

“You admit, then, that a *mésalliance* is a thing to be ashamed of?”

“That was not spoken like yourself, mother,” replied Lord Davenport. “Of course I do, where the disparity regards cultivation of mind.—Surely you do not class a handsome gamekeeper who can barely write or read, in the same category with an accomplished, well-bred woman?”—

“Pre-advised as I am of the state of the case, and that her father is a clergyman’s son, *I* may judge her otherwise. But I fear, my dear son, you will find that public opinion—”

“Public opinion!” interrupted Lord Davenport, rising impatiently from her side, “leave that

specious tribunal to adjudicate for your Eustaces and Warnefords. It is not worthy of my mother. The time is past for responsible human beings to sacrifice their children to the hateful rites of Moloch!"—



## CHAPTER III.

IT was a matter of unspeakable consternation to Hamilton Drewe, while prowling about Pulteney Street, "his custom ever of an afternoon," to note the visit of Lord Davenport to Hargood's lodgings: nothing doubting that his lordship was deputed by his brother to keep an eye upon the progress of his delegate.—Conscious how ill he had succeeded in advancing the plans of Marcus, and dreading to see the return of the new M.P. announced in the daily papers, poor Drewe almost fretted himself into a fever of terror and remorse.

He sometimes thought of frankly seeking Lord Davenport with whom he had become acquainted at his brother's lodgings. But this was in such palpable opposition to the strict secrecy enjoined by his absent friend, that he had not courage; and between his fear of Marcus's resentment, and his reminiscences of the Helena and Hermia he had beheld "sewing at one sampler," his mind was so troubled, that there seemed every probability of his at length producing a poem sufficiently obscure and incomprehensible, to be pronounced by modern critics the height of sublimity.

But there were others besides the transcendental Drewe, to whom the expectation of Captain Davenport's return was a source of painful anxiety. His Cousin Amy, though the *prestige* of his name was considerably diminished by the slight esteem in which she found it held by the Hargoods, as well as by the proverbial fact that "the absent are always in the wrong," felt so guiltily apprehensive that

her former feelings towards him could not have escaped his penetrating eye, as to look forward with the utmost repugnance to meeting him again.

Right joyfully, therefore, had she seized the pretext afforded by Mrs. Burton's letter, to urge her mother into leaving town ; and so benevolent a being as the Rector of Radensford would have rejoiced indeed, could he have surmised how completely the seeming sacrifice made to his comfort, accorded with the earnest desire for retirement of the young girl he welcomed so fondly ; no less than with the yearning of her widowed mother to kneel once more beside her husband's grave.—Even Marlow, when her eyes rested upon the well-clipped laurel hedge of the rectory garden, after so many penitential months of brick and mortar, could scarcely refrain from an outcry of joy.

After folding Amy in his arms, the venerable pastor, whose long grey locks hung down upon

cheeks considerably hollowed by care and anxiety since their last meeting, held her back for a moment at arm's length, to ascertain what changes had been effected by a London life in her youthful countenance. But the traces he had dreaded to find, were wholly wanting.—The London which, at the same early age, had done so much to estrange from him the heart of his daughter, was still as much a mystery to Amy as when she quitted Meadows Court. Though her mourning had been for six months laid aside, not so much as a glimpse of the gay world had dazzled her young eye. Yet while the good old Rector was examining her sweet face, though the blush that accompanied her ready smile attested her sensibility to be as lively as ever, he fancied he discerned a little dimness in those soft hazel eyes.—But what wonder? Sorrows wholly unconnected with what *he* esteemed the besetting trial of her age and sex, had indeed overclouded the destiny of the darling of poor Sir Mark.

It was no small relief to her to find that Lady Harriet was absent from the Manor. Mr. Henderson was of opinion that his old friend purposely prolonged her absence, from reluctance to meet the neighbours before whom she had so pompously paraded the standard of her family immaculacy, which the frailty of her niece had now dragged down to the ordinary level of sinful human nature.

To her nephew, the new tenant of Meadows Court, he refrained from all allusion; feeling that the subject must be unpleasing to the inmates to whom he hoped to make the sojourn of his house as cheerful as was compatible with its gravity. Nor indeed, if they had questioned him, had he much to tell.—Mr. Eustace had as yet visited the place only to superintend the progress of the workmen; and was now settled in London, for the discharge of his parliamentary duties.

Even Mary Tremenheere, when she came jogging with the deaf old Admiral to administer



vapid embraces and common-places to her former neighbours, had nothing to whisper concerning "poor dear Lady Harriet's nephew:"—attributing perhaps the absence of both, to the penance in a white sheet they were somewhere or other performing, for the misdemeanour of "poor dear Lady Harriet's niece."—It is true that even her usual diluent small-talk was in some degree suspended with wonder at seeing Amy lovely and light-hearted as ever, though still Miss Meadows. Little did she surmise,—she who attributed her own single blessedness to the spite of those other old maids the Fates, in keeping her remote from the great metropolis where Cupids infest the streets like sparrows,—and wedding-rings are an article of vulgar consumption,—that Amy's charms had effected no mightier conquest than that of two grotesque goosecaps,—A. A. the Lovelace of Clifton,—and H. D. the man of many stanzas and dishevelled love-locks.—Still less did she suppose that the beautiful girl before her had bestowed her affec-

tions in vain ; on a cousin as stony-hearted towards *her* as Mary Tremenheere had found his whole intractable sex towards herself.

“ It is a great comfort to have you and your dear mother here again, Amy,” said she, in her usual querulous accents ; while her uncle replied by short and expressive grunts to the conversation laboriously carried on with him by Lady Meadows through an acoustic tube, which looked like a comatose viper ;—“ for this neighbourhood is not what it was, my dear, or ever will be, I sadly fear, again.—In the first place, Meadows Court is as good as lost to us.—That supercilious Mr. Eustace, whom they used to call Young Vapid, never makes his appearance ; and when he comes at last, will probably fill the house with disreputable, broken-down, men of fashion.—Then, poor dear Rachel Burton, between little Sophy’s increased illness and increased fortune, seems so pre-occupied that she cannot command a leisure hour for rational conversation. As to poor dear Lady

Harriet, Radensford has probably seen the last of her! I don't know how she could face the village in the parish church, after all the Pharisical sermons she has been preaching for the last forty years to the poor,—casting stones at people to the right and left, without mercy, as if she and hers were alone exempt from sin and its penalties."

"We must try and make amends to you, during our visit here, for all you have lost," said Amy, good-humouredly. "The last two years have indeed effected sad changes for us all."

Of the changes effected in her old home, Amy took an early opportunity of judging.—The first time Mr. Henderson succeeded in persuading Lady Meadowes to accompany him in a gentle airing in the pony phaeton sent down to him by Rachel on her first visit to town, Amy persuaded Marlow to bear her company, across the forest, to Meadowes Court.

The spring was in its best of beauty. Green

leaves bursting on every tree,—birds caroling on every branch,—squirrels flitting from bough to bough, — the ground covered as by a snow-shower, with white anemones,—the moss pretending to blossom and spread as if on forest ground it were no longer a weed or an intruder. —How she enjoyed the freshness and verdure, from which she had been so long estranged!—How heartily did she join in the exclamation of poor old Marlow—“Ah! Miss Amy, darling, there warn’t nothing compare-able with this in smoky Lunnon.”

“Nay, my mind misgives me, Marlow,” she added, “that Mrs. Burton will find no purer or more wholesome air for poor little Sophy, in the climate to which she is conveying her.”

Perhaps, while Marlow was venting her philosophy on the “foolishness of dragging sick folks away from their comfortable homes to die among strangers,” Amy’s discursive imagination might be roaming still further; and wondering what pleasure people could

find in a sketching cruise in the Levant, when such beautiful scenery might be found in their native country.—But both she and her attendant pursued their way in silence: each absorbed in affecting recollections connected with the surrounding landscape.

It was the footway from Meadows Court to Radensford Church; and how often had Amy traversed it, hand-in-hand with her father; in winter, over the crunching snow;—in summer, over the slippery moss.—There, too, in the green glade below, where the pool, now polished as steel, was in leafy June concealed under a surface of water-lilies,—she remembered, one November day, Sir Mark flushing the first woodcock of the season.—Further on, a turn of the path brought them within view of a little wilderness of thorn-trees, where it had been Amy's delight, in childhood, to gather for her invalid mother the earliest May-flowers of the year. Then came the old stone-pit, where the pony was so apt to shy



and turn restive.—At last, towering over the ragged, stag-horned trees of the forest, appeared the noble line of the beechen avenue of Meadows Court; like a well-drilled brigade drawn up in line, after an irregular skirmish of sharpshooters.—They looked like friends, those dear old trees;—and Amy stood still to salute them with looks of love; then pursued her way onwards,—why, *why* could she no longer say homewards,—with a heavy and more deliberate step than before.

When the house itself came in sight, she held her breath for anguish. Thankful was she to find it looking so different from its days of old. Plate-glass windows, each of a single pane, and the well laid out French garden, surrounding the house in place of the old moat, had as completely changed its outline, as the careful cleansing of the mossy stone walls, its complexion. It was now a cheerful modern residence; less venerable, but far more attractive.

"I am glad, after all," thought Amy, "that Mr. Eustace took the place. Sir Jervis is not rich enough to have done all this; and had I found it as it used to be, and myself a stranger within its gates, it would have broken my heart.—*This* Meadows Court is not the one I loved so well."

Marlow, who saw things in another light, and was now sobbing like a child at what she considered almost culpable innovations, demurred about proceeding further.—They were within a few hundred yards of the gate: but "she couldn't a bear," she said, "that the new people's people should see 'em coming like spies, to watch what was a doing."

Still, Amy gently proceeded, leaving her companion loitering behind. When within a very short distance of the hall-door, however, she stopped short, as if paralysed. Could she believe her eyes? Old Blanche,—old Sting,—basking on the door-step; who, on recognising her, darted forward to overpower her with

rough caresses, just as they used in days of old !

Oh ! how she missed the hearty laugh that used to encourage their uproarious proceedings ; —the kindly smile which used to beam upon her from the doorway !—No dear father, now ! —The very dogs, by their whining response to her endearments, seemed trying to remind her that some one was absent, who would never return to caress them again.

She could not but wonder how the poor animals, crouching at her feet, came to be on the spot.—For at her departure, Lady Meadows had bestowed them on Manesty the keeper, with a sufficient gratuity to insure their being taken care of for life. But a moment afterwards, her astonishment was completed by seeing Manesty himself emerge from the house, —*minus* only the tanned leggings, and shot-belt, of former days.

What joy to the old man when he saw on whom the dogs were fawning ! It was as

much as he could do to refrain from placing his hand upon her head and bestowing his blessing on dear Miss Amy; and it was as much as Amy could do to refrain from resting her head upon his shoulder, to conceal her bursting tears. Manesty, her father's foster-brother, seemed a portion of her father's self.

His tale was soon told, when she became composed enough to listen.—He and his wife had been re-engaged from the first by the new tenant; and were, during his absence, custodians of the house.

“So that you can take me round the place, Manesty, without fear of interruption?”

“Ay sure, Miss Amy. Proud and glad ’ll be my ould ’oman to show you over the ould ’ouse.”

Saving for the five minutes required to tie on a clean white apron, and her Sunday cap, Mrs. Manesty lost no time in obeying the

summons of her husband; whom Amy had despatched in the interim to fetch and re-assure poor Marlow.

Different, indeed, was the aspect of the cheerful, airy, well-kept house into which they were now introduced, from the rough state of things insisted upon by poor Sir Mark;—still more so, from the littered barn so inopportunately visited by Mark Davenport.

“It seems as if master wouldn’t be much here, Miss Meadowes,” said the old lady, who insisted upon throwing open every nook and cranny; “for if you’ll believe me, Miss, he’s never yet slep’ in the ’ouse.—Howsever, he’s got one-and-twenty year afore him; so he may take his time and pleasure.”

“Mr. Eustace’s father has a fine family seat at nearly two hundred miles’ distance,” said Amy, apologetically.

“Daunt believe the geame’s more plentiful there, nor the pastures nigh so rich as here-



about," broke in Manesty. "When measter finds that he goes funder and fares worse, maybe he'll come and look a'ter his own."

Miss Meadows attempted no further vindication of him; being engaged in admiring the simple but well-selected furniture of the drawing-room,—chintz and maple wood only, but of the newest and best patterns, and wearing as yet their gloss of newness.—In the "eating room" and library, on the contrary, all was rich and massive.—But to her amazement, many of the old family pictures were restored.

"Measter bought up as many on 'em as he could, whersever they'd been sold at the hogshion to Radensford or Cardington folk, for the sake o' th' ould family. The most of orders he gave was to make the place look as nigh as might be what it had used to look; more particular my lady's suit o' rooms, Miss, and your own, as was a'most pulled to pieces when you left'em."

This gratuitous piece of information luckily prepared poor Amy for the startling spectacle that presented itself when these apartments were thrown open, and the April sun streamed in upon the newly-hung papers and draperies ;— a facsimile of those which had been defaced or scattered.—Everything seemed prepared for them to resume their former place, and former occupations, except that all was grown young and fresh again, or as if dipped in Medea's cauldron.

“ Mcaster left partic'lar orders never to show the 'ouse to none o' the neighbours,” said Mrs. Manesty ; “ more 'specially, these rooms, Miss, was never to be opened, except for airing. But in course, Miss Amy, measter couldn't a mean you nor my lady to be shut out :—for he and all on us athought as you'd never set foot in these here parts again,—more was the pity.”

Even gratified as she was, Amy was glad to get out of the house. Though William

Eustace was more than a hundred miles off, pinned down in Parliament under the weight of prose which is supposed to legislate for the nation,—she felt, so long as she remained within the walls where his spirit had been thus active, as if he were present.—She almost fancied that his eye was upon her, while she stood contemplating that dear old room which he had called anew into existence ; the scene of all her childish joys and girlish imaginings.

It was a relief to get into the air again. Leaving Marlow to maunder on with her old fellow-servants, she was off into the shubberies,—across the lawns,—to lean once more on the iron-fence of the paddock as she had done on that bright June morning,—that happy birthday,—which first introduced her to the reader. Not quite two years before: but then, a child,—and now, a woman:—a woman because she had suffered and made others suffer;—a woman because,

even when suffering, she could forget herself in order to promote the happiness of others.

“It is as well,” mused Amy, as she once more fixed her eyes on the silvery bolls of the old beech-trees, still leafless though exhibiting a partial tinge of green,—“it is as well, perhaps, that William Eustace should be absent. I could not help thanking him. I feel really grateful, really touched by his devotedness. How few men are capable of such thoughtful and unselfish delicacy!—Least of all Mark Davenport. I should not have found poor Blanche and Sting at the hall-door, or my foolish old muslin curtains reinstated, had *he* succeeded us at Meadowes Court. He calls such things ‘bosh.’ Perhaps he is right.—But at all events things may be *bosh*, yet exercise a wonderful influence over the happiness of daily life.”

A little further on, an old hunter of her father’s, which, failing a kind master, Lady

Meadowes, at her departure, had ordered to be shot, was comfortably grazing in the paddock,

Unkempt, untrimm'd, unshorn,

evidently kept only for his own enjoyment of the hay and corn of this world.

“There *must* be good in this man!”—mused Amy. “After all, I was perhaps unfortunate that we had not met previous to my having heard the name of my Cousin Mark, and admired his sketches in Rachel Burton’s album.”

She might in that case, have been less keenly alive to Young Vapid’s supercilious languor of character and deportment.—If, on their first acquaintance, he had addressed her with even ordinary civility, still more, if he had betrayed the smallest indication of the warmth of attachment and sacrifices of which he had now shown himself capable, she should most assuredly have— “But it was no use thinking of it *now*!”



## CHAPTER IV.

AMY almost dreaded the prospect of meeting her mother, after her recent discoveries. She was afraid of betraying too much feeling in recounting to Lady Meadows all she had seen ;—still more afraid of raising up, by the narrative, too eager an advocate for William Eustace.

But the moment they were alone together, before she had time to utter a syllable, her mother threw her arms around her neck, in an agony of tears.

As might have been predicted, the object of

Lady Meadows's drive with the good old Rector, was to visit the grave of her husband, as yet unhonoured by a tribute to his memory ; —and, leaning on Mr. Henderson's arm, she tremblingly approached the spot.—But what was her emotion when, having reached the chancel of Radensford church under which lay the family vault, on raising her eyes towards the long line of monuments recording the antiquity and virtues of the family of Meadows, she beheld a handsome mural tablet of black and white marble, bearing his arms and consecrated to the memory of Sir Marcus Meadows, Bart., with the dates of his birth and decease, and a record that he lived beloved by his family, and died respected by his tenants and esteemed by his neighbours.

Such a tribute to the worth of her late husband, it had been her utmost ambition to dedicate.—The object of her more than strict economies, during the preceding year, had in fact purported to compass an expense scarcely

compatible with her straitened income. But as yet, the fund set apart for this sacred object was not half equal to the purpose.—And to have been thus kindly anticipated!

She could not doubt that Sir Jervis Meadows, indifferent as he had shown himself to the interests of herself and her daughter, had fulfilled the pious duty of completing the monumental record of the family honours; and in the warmth of her gratitude, already extended her forgiveness to a thousand minor offences of the new baronet. Though he had acted shabbily in trifles, it was clear he had a noble heart.

In the prayers which she had come thither to address to the Almighty for him who slept beneath, and which now, amid her widow's tears, came forth from the very depths of her heart, the compassionate friend who had fulfilled a kinsman's office by honouring the memory of the dead, was duly remembered.

It was long after she came forth again from

the gloomy church into the reviving air, that the cessation of her broken sobs enabled her to testify to her reverend companion, her deep sense of obligation towards Sir Jervis Meadows.

“We seem strangely in the dark, dear lady,” replied Mr. Henderson, “if I understand you to refer to the tablet we have just visited?—Sir Jervis has nothing to do with the affair.—Here, we have been led to believe that it was by yourself the monument was put up.”

“Would that it had been so. But you, who know the limit of my means, will not be surprised to learn that I have been yet unable to economise a sufficient sum for the purpose.”

“It is true that Burnaby and I were a little startled by so considerable an outlay. It was, however, on your ladyship’s account that application was made to me for leave to erect the monument; and it was most decidedly in

*your* name, that the workmen on the spot were remunerated."

"It is an unaccountable mystery," said Lady Meadowes, with a deep sigh: "and one I must make it my duty to unravel"

"Better, perhaps, leave it undisturbed," replied the good Rector. "The act, by whomsoever executed, is one of grace and friendship. The friend may not wish to have his name dragged into publicity."

"On what possible account, dear Sir?"

"I have my own suspicions on the subject," answered Mr. Henderson, "but I have no pretence for promulgating it."

"But to *me*—only to *me*!"

"In one word then, the singular deference testified by our new neighbour at Meadowes Court towards every family tradition and usage connected with the place, inclines me to believe that Mr. Eustace is the person who has ventured to forestal your wishes."



Lady Meadows had just come to the same conclusion. Still, she scarcely liked to hear it proclaimed by another.

“But what could be his motive for acting so generously, yet so mysteriously?” said she, in a faltering voice; anxious to ascertain to what extent William Eustace’s unfortunate passion for Amy had transpired in the neighbourhood.

“Some time ago,” replied Mr. Henderson, “our friend Lady Harriet Warneford apprised me that the Eustaces had entered into a family compact for the future union of their son with the young daughter of Lord and Lady Davenport; and I have since heard from Lady Harriet that the young man is a constant visitor at their house.”

“It is true,” replied Lady Meadows, faintly.  
“It is all true.”

“In that case, he may wish to recommend himself to his future mother-in-law, by rescuing

from ruin the home of her childhood, and doing honour to the memory of her brother."

"You have perhaps guessed rightly," she replied, at once struck and grieved by the plausibility of the conjecture. But as they had now reached the Rectory, all further discussion of the subject was for a time suspended.

It was not till she found herself alone with her darling Amy, that Lady Meadows gave free indulgence to the tears which such conflicting emotions had drawn from her heart. But not even to Amy did she confide how deep was her sorrow that the mere caprice of girlish levity had induced her to reject, without thought or investigation, a man so endowed . . . with noble qualities as the new master of Meadows Court.

Amy had lost him. His troth-plight with her cousin would doubtless be proclaimed as soon as she had accomplished her seventeenth year, and laid aside her mourning.—Olivia

Davenport was to be the happy mistress of that beloved Meadows Court, overclouded, for so many years, by the enmity of her parents. Olivia was to reign and rule in a spot where she had once flattered herself of seeing her own dear daughter installed by hereditary right; where from childhood she had been loved and respected; and where she might now be established by its master's unbiassed choice.

But as Amy had herself said—"It was too late." Too late!—How useless to think of it now.

If these perplexities afforded some drawback to the enjoyment anticipated by Lady Meadows and her daughter in the tranquil seclusion of Radensford, and the sweetness of the bursting spring, the absence of Amy from London was equally regretted by her two cousins—the aristocratic, and the plebeian.

No Marcus had arrived, or was likely to arrive, to fill her place. On the contrary, he

had written to Lord Davenport, entreating him to procure a further privilege of absence, on the ground of ill-health: assuring him that if that plea did not avail, he preferred resigning his seat, at once, to returning to London.—And the kind Hugh, though less alarmed than his mother at the announcement of prolonged indisposition from one accustomed to consider only his own wild and wayward fancies, at the cost of any other person's convenience or of his own credit, complied with his request.—Still, after obtaining the concession, he would have been better pleased to feel certain that he was only gratifying a whim, than that illness might have some real share in detaining the truant.

Nor would he have regretted perhaps that Marcus should be on the spot to witness the verification of his often-repeated prophecy that Hugh, so overmastered in the Commons, was pitched to the exact diapason of the Upper House.—Among his peers, his mild unpretend-

ing Reason was accepted with respect, though ungarnished with the flash eloquence, or pretentious solemnity, of popular mountebanks.—Already, Lord Davenport was acquiring a name; a name endorsed by the press, and accredited by the public.—Such honours had been hitherto alone wanting to stimulate him to exertion.—Repressed from boyhood by his father, outpassed by his younger brother, he had given up the race too early in the day. But already in a more genial atmosphere, his feelings and faculties were beginning to expand and fructify.

“ I envy you, Davenport,” William Eustace often said to him, as they quitted together the House in which they officiated at the minute-hand and hour-hand of the same dial.—“ Were I in the Lords, I feel that I could do something, both for myself and the world.—But in *our* House, the time is past for individual ambition. The atticism of Parliament has disappeared, like the colours of some fine old fresco.—While



it lasted, to be a good listener was nearly as great a distinction as to be a good speaker.— But now, one is ashamed to listen ;—unless some party cry, some Dumfater, or Abyssinian War-boast, has given the signal that he, who hath ears to hear, may as well be attentive. Even this comes so seldom, that I wish I were out of it all.”

“ And yet, when I was one of you, which is not so long ago,” replied Lord Davenport, with a smile, “ I always found that, independent of one’s duties, the House of Commons was the pleasantest lounge in London ; — the best club, the best party, and the place where more information might be picked up in a given time, than in any other public assembly. — From a moderately good speaker, one learns and retains more than from a remarkably good book.”

“ Don’t talk to me about moderately good speakers !” cried Eustace.—“ Confound them all, individually and collectively !—When the

French had exhausted every other crime, they invented Deicide. To my thinking, the everlasting drawlers one is called upon to endure, night after night, are accomplishing the extinction of patriotism, without extenuating circumstances.—After listening for a couple of hours to one of Humanhaw's speeches,—(cofferdams, *I* call them,—hollow obstacles to the tide of public business—) I swear I am capable of voting for the Repeal of the Union, the Independence of Scotland, or the Emancipation of India,—so that chaos might come again,—the Constitution be reduced to immortal smash, and Humanhaw to silence !—”

Lord Davenport perceived by the bitterness of his friend,—a mood so much more characteristic of a Curt de Cruxley than of the sober-minded Eustace,—that something sorely ailed him. But he was not sufficiently in his secrets to surmise the origin of his irritation, however intent on soothing it.

“ Shall we dine together to-day at the Tra-

vellers?" said he. "Your family, I find, are not in town this season; and mine have still two months unexpired of their mourning; so that we are two destitute orphans."

"Another error of our ancestors to be reformed, those long family mournings!" exclaimed Eustace, without noticing the invitation; "an error leading only to hypocrisy and interruption of the business of life.—Out of our allotted three-score years and ten, a man of extensive connections spends nearly a dozen in a black coat; affecting to deplore events which occur in the inevitable course of nature.—Even the antediluvians, endowed with a marvellous stretch of days, put a more rational limit to their sackcloth and ashes."

"I agree with you as regards complimentary mournings," replied Lord Davenport, gravely. "I would have *them* curtailed in the same proportion that court mournings have been wisely shortened.—But to parents, to the heads of a family, assign all honour and respect!"

“With all my heart,” replied Eustace, ‘evidently entertaining considerable spleen, just then, against the forms which seclude crape and bombazine from the intrusion of visitors. “As I have sworn to die a bachelor, it is probable that, like Regan, I may ‘never have a babe to honour me.’ But should I hereafter find my quiver full of arrows, I shall enact by will, that any little Eustace, seen in broad hems more than three months after my decease, shall derive no benefit from my estate. Three months after date is very fair usage for human affliction, in this accelerated world of ours, where the whistle of the railway-engine is beginning to overpower even the cry of nature.”’

“I cannot agree with you,” replied his friend. “You may shorten journeys, and whist, and agues: but you can no more abridge the flow of human tears than of the ocean’s tides.—You may condense aliments, and essentialize

drugs and minerals. But be satisfied with your nicotine, morphine, quinine, gelatine ; and let the balsams of our innermost hearts retain their utmost volume."

"I don't want to abrogate a tittle of the privileges of nature," cried Eustace. "Grieve in your own chamber, and be still. But I say again, that half the mourning in which we enrobe our persons, is the mere mockery of woe. The Jews were told to rend their hearts and not their garments. Christians ought to darken their liveries no longer than their hearts are darkened."

"If you mean by all this," said Lord Davenport, fancying that he at length discerned the drift of his censures, and willingly coinciding in his views, "that you think it a piece of superfluous pragmatism my inviting you to dine at a club, when you might join without much breach of decorum the dinner-table of one who has been ten months a widow, I am



quite willing to cry *peccavi*, and lay the *venue* in Spring Gardens instead of in Pall Mall.—What say you?”

“That I thankfully accept the exchange. I was in hopes Lady Davenport had begun to consider me, last year, so much one of her family, as not to feel me, even now, out of place at her dinner-table.”

Such was the origin of Eustace's re-admittance into the home-circle of the Davenports, alluded to by the Rector of Radensford.—He was now constantly in New Street. Vicinity to the House of Commons and intimacy with Hugh, had of course some share in his visits. What other motive rendered him so keenly alive to the charm of a quiet orderly home, as different from the Barfont Abbey, with the best covert-shooting and dry champagne in the United Kingdom, and which, in his days of subjection to fashionable duchessdom he had declared to be Elysium,—was yet to be determined. In New Street, he was called upon to applaud

no triumphs of gastronomy,—no *salmis d'ailes de mauviète*,—no ruffs and rees, *en caisse*,—no *laitances d'éperlans à la Cambacères*;—no Comet wines, no Madeira which, like some obsolete diplomatist has made the tour of the world,—becoming dryer and obtaining fresh orders at every remove.—He found only excellent English fare, and excellent society; entailing on the morrow neither indigestion, the remorse of the stomach; nor *ennui*, the remorse of the spirits.—Could he have said half as much after the orgies of Barfont Abbey!

Somewhat late among the visitors who arrived to welcome Amy and her mother to Radensford Rectory, was the gruff old doctor from Cardington.

“I ought perhaps to have been with you sooner, my dear good lady,” said he, in answer to the grateful greeting of Lady Meadows. “But faith and truth,—I’m a little in the suds with ye both.—Yes, Miss Amy,—you may

raise your pretty eyebrows.—But you, in particular, have not dealt handsomely with your poor old co-guardian.”

Miss Meadowes took her customary place by his side, and sportively demanded an explanation.

“Well, then,—if I am to state my grievances in detail, as though memorialising the Treasury, in the first place you make and unmake matches for yourself, as though I were not the first person to be consulted !”

“I can assure you, dear doctor,” interposed her mother, “there has been no question of a marriage for her.”

“No question *popped*, I suppose you mean ; for you won’t deny, I suppose, that all your acquaintance in Clifton were talking of the courtship betwixt her and her soldier cousin ?”

Lady Meadowes might have replied that her acquaintance in Clifton fell under the description by which the Italian Padre used to address his scanty flock “*Pochissimi Signori*.” She

contented herself by saying that "whatever might have been said or thought by their friends, Captain Davenport was otherwise attached before he became acquainted with his Cousin Amy."

"Then best say no more on that chapter, my dear ma'am.—'Tis far less likely *you* would deceive me, than that Madam Darby yonder, with her long words and long corkscrews, deceived herself.—But I swear she told me, when I looked in upon her for a moment last spring, that Miss Meadows, whom she described as 'a sweet young lady, but 'igh,' had declined the proposals of a gentleman of independent fortune with whom she had been the means of bringing her acquainted, in favour of a 'Capting something or another, which *called* himself the Honourable, and *called* himself her cousin.' Of course I had no difficulty in putting a name to the 'Capting' and cousin."

"And believe *me*, dear Dr. Burnaby," in-

terruted Amy, "the proposals of Mrs. Darby's *protégé* were quite as imaginary as the love of my Cousin Mark. I do not believe he offered his hand even to Marlow; though she snubbed him quite as much as if he had presumed on such an affront. So now for the second place of your apology."

"Well, the second reason for my procrastinated visit, does not exactly regard yourself.—To own the truth, I avoid as much as possible, just now, to find myself within hail of poor Henderson."

"*You?*—His friend for forty years past!"

"Ay, 'tis for that very reason! I love him like a brother, and therefore can't answer him like a Judas. He *will* question me about his daughter,—about his grandchild;—and I don't care to answer."

"You have a bad opinion, then, I fear of poor little Sophy?" said Lady Meadowes, anxiously.



"I look upon her, my dear ma'am, as already in her coffin."

"Poor child!—Poor mother!"

"I told Mrs. Burton nearly as much before she started.—'Twas my duty,—a painful one,—but still, a duty."

"And how did she bear it?"

"She turned deaf as a stone. She did not choose to hear."

"We mothers cling so earnestly to *any* spar, in such a wreck of the affections!—"

"I can't admit you both into the same category under the name of 'we.' Had I told *you* that your child was beyond the aid of medicine or the curative influence of climate, and that it would be a mercy to let her last moments elapse in peace among her own people, you would not have dragged her to a foreign country, to be harassed by strange faces and comfortless surroundings."

"I will not answer for myself, doctor.—In

the darkness of such a moment, the slightest hope shines with a phosphorescent light."

"My dear lady, remember the ejaculation of the great Dr. Pitearn, on landing, an invalid, at Lisbon, (my master, by the way, when I walked the hospitals, we won't say how many years ago,) 'Is *this* the dog-hole, I have sent so many consumptive patients to die in?'—I told her *that*. I told her—But 'twas no use.—To go, she was determined,—and go, she *did*."

"Do not blame her, doctor. What could be more natural than that she should profit by her change of fortune to use every effort in little Sophy's behalf?"

"Many things, my dear child, might be more natural. That she should stoop, for instance, to be instructed by those wiser than herself;—that she should consider her father as well as her child. I've known Rachel Burton nigh upon thirty years. She saw the light here, an infant in my arms, just when your precious

mother came among us as a wife.—Don't fancy that I compare them. It would be Lombard Street to a chayny orange,—or a golden guinea to a silver groat.”

“Come, come, my dear doctor,” exclaimed Lady Meadowes, “I am not so long past the blushing age, as to sit and listen to such flatteries.”

“No flatteries,—truth, ma'am, severest truth,” cried the old doctor, shaking a lingering grain of snuff from his finger and thumb.—“Yours has been through life the portion of the Roman matron,—we'll drop the Latin, Miss Amy, and call it the hearth-side and the distaff.—Hers——”

“No scandal about poor Rachel, doctor,” interposed Lady Meadowes, somewhat anxiously, dreading some allusion to the name of Marcus.

“Hers,—though a single old fellow betwixt two females, let me have my say,—*hers* has been the portion of the restless heart,—the unquiet mind.—From the time when she wore

her poor old father to a thread by fretting after theatres and ball-rooms and London fiddle-faddle,—to the days when she worried *me* into a fever by insisting on carrying about my little patient, to whom rest and quiet were all in all, to Malvern, Torquay, Buxton, Scarborough, any where and every where but home, I have perceived there was a worm at the core to induce such perpetual motion. Rachel Burton's nature is not in a healthy state. If I could lay my finger on her moral pulse, my life on't I should find it out."

"Sacred be the secrets of the prison-house, dear doctor," said Lady Meadows, placing her own finger on her lip. "For many years, we have witnessed the exemplary life poor Rachel has been leading. Let us pray that all may yet end well; and both mother and child be restored to us in safety."

"*Your* kind wishes were never yet wanting, even when undeserved," rejoined Dr. Burnaby. "The only thing that reconciles me to this

foolish, feverish, woman's love of gadding, is that her absence is the cause of your presence here. But that the office of the good Samaritan awaited you, you might never have returned to Radensford!—”

“ This place possesses attractions for us, my dear doctor, which time nor tide can ever wear away,” rejoined Lady Meadows, feelingly.

“ Well, well!—I'll scold *you* no more just now. But while we're in the vein for abusing our neighbours, let us go the whole round of them.—The poor Admiral, for instance, grows deafer and deafer every day. I doubt whether he'd flinch under the broadsides of a fleet of steam-frigates, at a naval review!—As to Mary, unless I despatch her to the chaperonage of Madam Darby-Ringlettina, to put up with Amy's leavings, I'm afraid we shall never find a Corydon hereabouts for our superannuated Phillis.”

“ Doctor, doctor!—what have we all done to you ?”



“ I say nothing of your friend, Lady Harriet,” said he, in conclusion, “ because as her pride has had a fall, we must show mercy. Whatever may have been their stiff-neckedness, she and her sister have severely paid the penalty.”

“ Is she likely to return soon to the Manor ?”

“ I should say not. I don’t think she’ll show again in this part of the country till young Eustace establishes himself at Meadowes Court for the shooting season.—He has hired both this and the neighbouring manor; and under shelter of her nephew’s importance, perhaps her ladyship may once more venture to look the sun and moon, (and Public Opinion,) in the face.”

“ Have you seen Mr. Eustace since he came into the country ?” inquired Lady Meadowes, timidly, fancying she might be leading to some critical disclosure.

“ Not I !—I have seen only what my old housekeeper calls the colour of his money. His parents sent me in a cheque, a Jew’s

ransom, for what they called curing him of his 'fever with typhoid symptoms.' But the fee was due to youth and a good constitution;—not to the old doctor. If *my* skill could have availed—”

He stopped short. It was not to Lady Meadows and Amy he could avow that the patient whom, during that grievous epidemic, he would have given his right hand to save, was lying in the chancel of Radensford Church!

To divert the conversation into some more cheerful channel, the old doctor began bantering anew his little friend.

“And what have you brought me from London, Miss Amy?” said he. “Since you have not, as I supposed, been occupied with conquests and courtships, I trust your pretty eyes and hands have been employed in the old doctor’s behalf. Where are the slippers you have worked for me, pray; and where is the drawing for me to hang t’other side my parlour

chimney-piece,—to match the lame horse, and dog with three legs, you made me frame upon your birthday, ten years ago?—Ringlettina informed me that you had been taking lessons of the cousin Capting; and got on, under his tuition, like a good 'un."

To his great surprise, a pair of slippers, with his initials in cut-velvet work, artistically finished, were immediately produced.

"For the drawing, dear Doctor Burnaby, you must choose your own subject; and it shall be ready in a great deal less than no time," said Amy, when the little hand that presented the slippers had been gratefully and paternally kissed.

"You are a better girl than I expected," said the old doctor, with tears in his eyes. "My fees, I see, are quite as readily forthcoming from *you* as from Lady Louisa Eustace! —Well, then,—I choose a scene in the forest of Burdans,—with wood-cutters in the foreground,—time, morning;—to complete which

will necessitate early rising, and sweep away the trace of London smoke (though I can't say I see much of it) from your pretty face.—But hush! here comes my friend Henderson,” said he glancing from the window towards the entrance gate.—“A letter too, in his hand;—and far from a cheerful expression in his face.—Heaven grant that he may have received no ill news from the Mediterranean!—”

## CHAPTER V.

THE progress of the session brought among other tardy perceptions, to the mind of Government, that the name of Lord Davenport, high as it stood among the rising orators and patriots of the day, would form a highly advantageous make-weight to its list of adherents. He was accordingly courteously summoned to an audience by a noble Nestor, the blackness of whose youthful locks were silvered over into venerability, like an old park-paling overgrown with lichen ;—by whom, after the usual solemn exordium, he was



favoured with an offer of the official dignities predicated in a former chapter, by the Cruxleyans, as the ultimate reward of the persevering donkey at Carisbrook!—

The young lord was by no means dazzled. Fond of his liberty and leisure, he was one of those who judge it extremely possible to serve their country with zeal and effect, without figuring in the muster-roll of the Red Book. But after respectfully declining, on being pressed to point out some other mode in which the good will of Government could be testified towards him, there occurred to his mind, in place of the bespeak of a Viscounty, Garter, or Lord-lieutenancy, dreaded by the great man whose courteous negative, a gilded pill, was already preparing,—to relieve the sense of obligation under which a too susceptible ministry appeared to labour, by asking for a working place of some few hundred pounds a year, for a gentleman and a scholar, of whose ability and integrity Lord Davenport offered

himself as guarantee, and in whose favour he was deeply interested.

Greatly relieved by so modest a price set upon his "services to government,"—services as disinterestedly and spontaneously performed as those of the morning sun or evening star, a few further questions concerning his lordship's *protégé* decided the matter ; and something as like a promise as the grudging nature of a man in office is capable of educing, was smilingly conceded. And lo ! in the course of the day, a confidential missive was despatched to the Secretary of the Treasury, enclosing the exact measure of the postulant for place ; just as it might have been forwarded to a slop-shop or ready-made shoe mart, for a reach-me-down, or a pair of bluchers.

Unused to the legerdemain of political-jobbery, Lord Davenport settled within himself that, in the course of the session, his recommendation might perhaps be attended to. Having

constantly heard, (from applicants who had nothing but merit, and no voice in either House to recommend them,) that every avenue of the public service was overflowing, that the list of the first Lord of the Treasury was stretched till the crack of doom, that a well-known Irish marquis could not get the smallest clerkship, or ensigncy, for either of the four last of his sons, nor a distinguished Scotch baronet obtain a tide-waitership at Sierra Leone for his favourite nephew,—he was not a little amazed at receiving, before the week was out, a letter which a Treasury seal and a heading of “private and confidential” proclaimed to be one of the little official whispers of Whitehall.

The appointment which Her Majesty’s Government had the “satisfaction of placing at Lord Davenport’s disposal in behalf of his *protégé*, Mr. Hargood,” was just such as he could have desired : a gentleman’s place, where abilities and above all, industry and zeal, would

tell ; and secure, after twenty years' service, a retiring pension.

Great was his gratitude, and becomingly expressed in the proper quarter. But now, for the first time, occurred to him a doubt whether he was likely to have secured gratitude in his turn ; whether he had not been precipitate ; whether he ought not first to have consulted the individual who seemed to take pride in playing Andrew Marvell, in a century where Andrew Marvells are out of place : since nobody has time either to solicit them with a bribe or to applaud their disinterestedness in refusing it.

Though he had some justification for intruding his patronage upon Edward Hargood, whether considered as brother to Lady Davenport's former governess, or to his aunt, Lady Meadowes,—it was far from improbable that his *protégé's* susceptible pride might take the alarm, and the unsolicited benefit be resented as an insult.

A singular fact,—that two members of the

order against which, his whole life long, Edward Hargood had been setting up his bristles, were at that moment severally watching from a distance, for an opportunity to heap kindness upon his head,—kept aloof only by the menacing aspect of his tusks.—He had never yet returned Lord Davenport's visit of ceremony. When he passed his lordship in the street, he touched his hat with an air almost of defiance, as he might have done to the "proud Duke of Somerset." In short, the amiable Hugh, enlightened and civilised but timid as a girl, almost trembled when he sat down to tender to the literary porcupine, a provision of five hundred per annum.

It happened that, at the moment he thus offered himself as the second providence of Pulteney Street, Hargood was temporarily released from the hauntings of Hamilton Drewe.—For the preceding week his erudite kinsman of Bloomsbury had departed this life.—The bookworm had become food for worms!

It was not because instituted his residuary legatee, heir to his MSS.—both parchment,



papyrus, and vulgar foolscap,—his Egyptian and Etruscan antiquities,—his minerals, and fossils, —and the well-dried Flora and well stuffed Fauna of the four quarters of the globe, — (to say nothing of bank stock and railway debentures,) that the younger Drewe took his deceased relative to his heart far more warmly than when he walked and talked,—or rather prosed.—His compunctious visitings for having neglected during his lifetime the old cenobite of those scientific communities, whose howls of lamentation for his loss were as terrific as the choruses of an amateur concert. The penny aliners did their worst to pile up the agony.—The very initials appended to his patronymic were five per cent in their favour; while archivists and necrologists of a higher order filled the columns of the weekly journals with homage to his memory: in requital of the crusty old port and wishy-washy amenity which, for forty years long, he had been dispensing to the writers. —After perusing in well-written, well-printed periods, all that Drewe senior had been, Drewe

junior began to fear that he was after all, only a gosling hatched by the owl of Minerva.

He set about his duties of mournership and executorship, however, with all the gravity becoming a legitimate owlet ; and after making a fruitless attempt to edge the grave of the great obscure into the cloisters of Westminster Abbey, or the vaults of St. Faith's, resolved upon a family mausoleum in the Highgate Cemetery, to afford ample space for the display of symbolic honours. Already, more than one sculptor Elect of the R. A., had been invited to send in his designs and estimates. And if the appropriate attributes of thirteen learned and scientific societies could not supply accessories for such a monument, no wonder that Chantrey himself was puzzled to surround with emblems the *hic jacet* of the millionaire wax-chandler ; to whose memory "*Fiat lux !*" was suggested as an appropriate epitaph.

It was noticed, indeed, that, after the last will and testament of the late lamented Wroughton Drewe, Esq., Fellow of every

learned and scientific association from A to Z, had been read and published, and it was found that his legacies to these remarkably incorporate bodies formed a nearer proportion to the amount of his real acquirements than to the bulk of his real estate, the howl of lamentation died away like that of a gale after sunrise. It certainly appeared hard that the learned compeers whom he had never forgotten to love, by letter or word of mouth, so long as his tongue or pen were in motion, should not find themselves remembered in the only MS. of his inditing calculated to maintain the smallest value in the eyes of posterity.

Edward Hargood was one of the few public journalists who declined adding more to his name, in notifying his decease, than the initial honours to which he was intitled, and the fact that he died lamented by a large circle of friends. But he did not, like many of these pseudo-mourners refuse his countenance at the funeral; having lived on terms so friendly with both the deceased and

the young kinsman who officiated as chief mourner.

It was on returning from this hollow ceremonial, disgusted a little with himself and a great deal with the learned friends of the deceased, his companions in the mourning coach, who, while crawling along in all the pomp of sable plumes and black cotton-velvet housings, had beguiled the tediousness of their progress by a squabble anent the Sidereal systems of Struve and Arago; and an argument concerning the sacred tooth of Gôtama the son of Soudhonhana, King of Kapilavaston and founder of the Buddhist faith; as exhibited under sanction of the British resident at Kandy and saluted by British sentinels,—the one declaring it to be an eye-tooth, the other, a molar,—it was while labouring under a sense of the littleness of those minds which the ignorant are deluded into believing great,—that the letter of Lord Davenport was placed in his hand.

What a transition,—from the gloom of an

open grave, where he had just seen a handful of dust rattled down upon a coffin,—to a prospect which was to him as a glimpse of the land overflowing with milk and honey!—

He was alone when he perused the letter. But he was literally ashamed to let even *himself* perceive how much he was agitated by the contents; muttering, as he rang for and hastily swallowed a glass of water, that the day was sultry and the Highgate Road a-dust.

Even after a second perusal of Lord Davenport's missive, and making himself master of the facts of the case,—the easy and pleasant nature of the duties imposed upon him,—the liberal salary,—the certainty of a provision to the end of his days,—instead of offering grateful thanks to Providence for his emancipation from comparative slavery and a precarious livelihood, he kept searching into the possible motives that might have induced this young aristocrat to take him under his protection.—Oh! organs of causality and comparison,—how often do ye



beguile us into looking into milestones, and cutting blocks with a razor !—

The most plausible reason he could surmise, nearly resembled that he had previously assigned to Lord Davenport's offer of his mother's carriage to convey him and his daughter to dinner in Spring Gardens.—He decided that, aware of his brother's desire to make Mary his wife, he was eager to retrieve the family from the ignominy of an alliance with a writer for bread.—“It would sound better for the house of Davenport, if its son wedded with an official man, than with a public journalist.”

Poor Hargood.—It was he, and not the Davenports, who was guilty of so narrow-minded a conclusion :—

He, to whose smooth-rubb'd mind could cling,  
Nor form, nor feeling, great or small,  
A reasoning, self-sufficing thing,  
An intellectual all-in-all,—

without human sympathy or human tenderness.

The notion being one of his own, he adopted it without much scrutiny. In that case, he must consider himself indebted to his daughter for his advancement in life. For the rest of his days, he, the scholar, the strong-minded man, must feel that he had been dragged into notice by an insignificant girl.—At the mere thought, he compressed his lips till the blood came !

While chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancies, he threw himself back in his elbow-chair, before the leather-covered table heaped with volumes fresh from the press ; emitting that sour and sickly smell of newly-boarded books and freshly printed paper, so different from the pungent muskiness of the old bindings in the Bodleian and National Museum,—the very aroma of learning :—an atmosphere redolent of Ruskin and Ainsworth, instead of Erasmus and Roger Ascham.—For fifteen years, not an object had been altered within the four walls of that room, stuffy and dusty as it seemed, after the purer air of Maytide which

he had been inhaling in the suburbs.—For fifteen years, not an object of comfort or luxury had his straitened income enabled him to add to his household gear.—And now, because his daughter was comely of aspect, he was to become the object of preferment, and attain comparative wealth !

He flung the letter into his desk,—locked the drawer with a jerk as if hiding from his eyes some vexatious object ;—and resolved to “take time” ere he closed with the specious offer.

Another moment, and his daughter was hastily summoned to his presence. Not to be conferred with, or consulted.—Of that, he never dreamed. But she might perhaps throw some light on the officious patronage of Lord Davenport.—She had perhaps been appealing in his behalf to the powerful brother of Marcus ? Perhaps, complaining of their miserable poverty, —of her laborious life ? Perhaps, who knows, betraying to this young lord that they were dunned by the tailor ; and anxious about the

grocer's bill?—He rang the bell with such vehemence, while smarting under the supposition, that even the little weazened maid looked terrified, though simply ordered, when she answered it, to tell Miss Hargood she was waited for.

With her usual lady-like serenity, unsuspecting of a coming storm, poor Mary made her appearance, to be roughly interrogated.—But her straightforward answers were readily made. She had seen Lord Davenport but once in her life, the preceding autumn. No communication between them had since taken place.

Pacified on that score, he proceeded to inquire about Marcus. But her conscience and her replies were equally clear. Since his departure from England, she had not heard a word of Captain Davenport.

As if by way of reparation for his unjust suspicions, her father unlocked his desk and placed the ominous letter in her hand. And now, if Lord Davenport could have been an

unseen spectator, he would indeed have triumphed in the result of his good offices. Such a glow of exultation streamed over her fine features!—Such a joyful consciousness seemed to pervade her whole frame!

Having completed the perusal of the letter and thoroughly mastered the contents, she approached her father and imprinted a pious kiss upon his forehead.

“Free, at last!” she exclaimed. — “An honourable independence for life!—A position worthy of my grandfather’s son!—No more drudgery;—no more truckling to low employers!—Thank Heaven—and *him*—you are free!—Dear Ned and Frank, too. They will be reared as gentlemen,—they will become all my poor dear mother desired them to be!”

“And you are certain, Mary,” said her father, bending upon her one of his keenest glances, unmoved by the sensibility which streamed like sunshine from her looks,—“that you have never apprised either of the brothers Davenport



of these ambitious pretensions,—never, through my poor foolish sister's weakness, allowed them to spy into the miserable nakedness of our land?—You are *quite* certain?"

"Father, you do me great injustice,—you often do me injustice," replied Mary, firmly. —"I would no more betray a secret of yours, than you would betray it yourself.—Not a complaint ever escaped my lips, either to my Aunt Meadowes or to any other person.—What Lord Davenport has done, is, I verily believe, a tribute to his conviction of your merit. What *you* will do to him,—to me,—to all of us,—if you mar this stroke of fortune only to gratify your personal pride, is scarcely to be thought of.—You cannot, *cannot* so fling away your prospects, and those of your children!—I have a right to ask it of you, father.—I have worked away my brightest days.—I have never known an idle hour,—scarcely a minute.—But I have submitted cheerfully; for it was for your sake and that of the boys.—For *my* sake and theirs, father, listen to me now.—Accept

this generous offer; accept it courteously and thankfully.—Lord Davenport deserves it. You know he does.—For long before he stirred in your behalf, or troubled his head about us, you used to tell me how highly you thought of him; and that he would one day or other prove an honour to the country.”

“Go to your own room, Mary, for I have a great deal of business on my hands in consequence of the indispensable engagement which absorbed my time this morning,” said Hargood, with repressed displeasure. “And for the future, spare me these effusions of nervous excitement.—Such displays are pardonable in Amy Meadowes, who has been reared on ether and sal-volatile. But you, Mary, a rational being, with occupations not to be trifled with, should exercise more self-control.—Go,—my dear,—Retire to your painting-room.”

## CHAPTER VI.

HARGOOD'S first proceeding was such as almost to justify the sinister anticipations of his noble patron :—he wrote to request a week's time for deliberation, ere he accepted the greatness thrust upon him. Influenced, however, either by a sense of decency or his daughter's eloquence, he phrased the request with the utmost courtesy ; and expressed as humble a thankfulness as was compatible with the attitude of a man "*le plus debout possible pour être à genoux.*"

But his next measure was one that surprised even himself. Having informed his daughter

that private business required him to absent himself from town for a day or two,—but nothing wherefore,—he put himself into an express-train, and hurried down to his sister. From her, he fancied he should learn something of the views and connections of the Davenports;—something that might explain why he had been so favoured, and whether the patron were, in word and deed, a man from whom he might stoop to incur obligation.

He did not think it necessary, on leaving home, to commend his daughter and his ducats to the care of Launcelot Gobbo, in the shape of the weazenened maid.—Ducats were next to none with him; and his Jessica was one who might be safely intrusted to her own good guardianship.

That he was a stranger to the venerable Rector of Radensford, and therefore unprivileged to intrude, occurred as little to the self-sufficient Hargood, as that “drums and wry-necked fifes” might be stirring in Soho.—He went straight to his mark,—bearing his own carpet-bag;

and the warmth with which he was welcomed certainly seemed to justify his expedition.

Even when the good old pastor returned home from his professional duties and found a stranger within his gates, there was no embarrassment on any side. Mr. Henderson, indeed, was unable to extend his hospitality as cheerfully as he would have wished; for the unfavourable news recently received from his absent daughter, sat heavily on the spirits of the whole party. But the brother of Lady Meadows had claims upon his regard, that were readily and cordially acknowledged.

From the moment of his arrival, his sister felt convinced that she was not indebted for his coming to the simple desire of seeing her again after a month's short absence. And when, with the awkwardness of a person unused to dissimulation, he began cross-questioning her about the Davenports, poor Amy instantly jumped at the conclusion that some terrible disaster had befallen the absent Marcus.

But no!—Marcus was by no means the



hero of his ditty. — Marcus was comparatively out of favour.—It was Lord Davenport and his mother, concerning whom Hargood seemed chiefly anxious.

Of *him*, Lady Meadows could speak only in terms of the highest eulogy:—as the best of sons—best of brothers—best of nephews—best of cousins.

But even this was not enough. Hargood wanted to hear something of his character as a friend and acquaintance,—as a master and landlord,—as a subject and politician; and on these heads, Lady Meadows, a timid woman, never allowing herself to pronounce on subjects beyond her reach, was puzzled to reply.—She scarcely knew whether the newly inheriting peer were Liberal or Conservative; except that, judging from the pretty general example of the day, she concluded that, because the late Lord Davenport had been a bigoted Tory, the present must be a Whig. In her married life, when poor Sir Mark used to prose over his port, such names were familiar in her ears as household

words: for there were Whigs and Tories on the earth in those days.

These slight revelations, however, afforded small advance to Hargood.—But though he had obtained little of the information he expected, he had derived advantages from the journey, on which he had not calculated:—the disengagement of thought and opinion sure to arise from hurried travel and relief from the routine of home. Under the salutary influence of that peaceful parsonage, those fertile meads of the Severn side, and the pleasant summer atmosphere, his irascible feelings subsided into a calm:—his brow unbent; his heart became susceptible of gentler impulses and nobler interpretations.

He had intended to remain forty-eight hours absent;—whether as a guest at the Rectory or a sojourner in Cardington; as so hurried a journey and too short a visit, would have afforded subject for surmise.—But had it been otherwise, neither his sister nor Mr. Henderson would have heard of his immediate departure.

Lady Meadows, above all, was eager that he should visit the place where so many years of her tranquil life were passed ; and on the morrow, accordingly, a beautiful morning in May, the air fragrant with blossoms and the whole landscape a garden, he consented to accompany Amy on the self-same track so recently described.

It had gained, however, in the interim. The shaggy thorns were now frosted with blossoms ; —the chestnut-trees were in full leaf,—the starry celandine glittered profusely amidst the moss, as though the white anemone blossoms had exchanged their silver for gold. The orchis in all its quaint varieties of shaping,—lilies of the valley shooting up their silver bells among the tawny oak-leaves of the preceding year ;—with hundreds of wild-flowers of less general note and favour, carpeted the way with a rich interminglement of colours.

The London Paria proceeded on and on ; absorbed in thought, and seemingly regardless of the gentle fawn that glided by his side.—

He was revolving in his mind the beauties of nature; but only in their relation to himself and his fortunes. These scenes, these flowers, these branching trees, this blue sky flecked with silver clouds, the glassy pool sleeping yonder in the bottom:—had he inherited no part in them? Was he from his birth an outcast? Could the merest hewer of wood or drawer of water enjoy his fill of these sylvan glories, while *he*, the intelligent,—the enlightened,—the laborious,—was doomed for life to the midnight gas, sooty atmosphere, and muddy street-ways of a city?—Was his foot *never* to be on the springy turf,—his eye *never* uplifted to the “vault of Heaven serene?—”

While Amy's simple heart luxuriated in the poetry of the season and the scene,—singing with the birds and blooming with the hawthorns,—Hargood was, as usual, wrapped round in philosophic discontent;—moralizing and grumbling, when Nature called upon him to enjoy.

At length, having traversed the strip of

ragged chase which the forest of Burdans interposed between Radensford and Meadows Court, and reached the first fence of Sir Jervis's estate, Hargood, suddenly brought to a standstill, raised his eyes from the ground, and saw before him at a short distance, the fine old avenue of beeches,—at that moment green as an emerald with the first vegetation of the year; save when, here and there, a slanting sunbeam, breaking through the branches, mellowed off the transparent verdure into gleaming topaz.

“Beautiful—most beautiful!” said he, with genuine admiration.

“Beautiful, indeed, uncle! Our own dear Meadows Court!”—cried Amy; and she had no further difficulty in hurrying on her hitherto laggard companion. He was full of interest in the spot:—as the former home of his sister,—as the birthplace of Mark Davenport's mother.

It was scarcely possible for experience of rural life to be narrower than that of Edward



Hargood. Henstead, the home of his youth, was a straggling village situated in the Essex marshes; and from the fenny environs of Cambridge, his next abiding-place, he removed at once into his London apprenticeship of literary drudgery.—Poor, and unconnected, few holidays brightened his laborious year.—An occasional snatch of sea-air at Brighton or Ramsgate, or far oftener on the monotonous shores of Southend or Broadstairs, was attempted more as a restoration than a pleasure.—The nobler features of the land of hypochondriacism and blue devils which, even in the days of the Puritans, had the audacity to call itself “Merry England,” were unknown to Hargood.—The feudal castle, the Elizabethan palace, the Corinthian façade, the baronial hall, the mere, the mountain pass, the spreading valley, figuring on his table in portfolios or illustrated serials,—had been as little realised to his perceptions as the cities of Mexico or temples of Ellora.—Never had he beheld them face to face:—never seen the emblazoned ban-

ner waving from the keep, the ivy mantling the loop-holed watch-tower, the prancing of horses issuing from the Gothic gateway: the pomp and circumstance of aristocratic life.—Still less the

Mountain crags and mountain torrents, whose  
Wild vapours shape illimitable worlds!

Even an antiquated house like Meadows Court, with its stone gables, and mismatched turrets, was as new to him as it would have been to an American tourist.—And while ushered at Amy's request, by Manesty and his dame, over its rambling suites and corridors, with constant reference to "my lady's room," "my lady's library," "my lady's private staircase," he remembered that, but for a trifling legal oversight, the girl by his side would have been now the owner of this fine old mansion and the spreading lands surrounding it, and he, consequently, felt a little less inclined to upbraid his sister for overrating the hereditary distinctions of her child.

The old armorial bearings carved in stone over the vast hall-chimney, and corresponding quarter by quarter with a singular escutcheon laughingly pointed out to him by Amy as they traversed Radensford village, in front of the public-house in which poor old Nichols and his savings were dwindling away,—were marked with the date 1618: the epoch when Whigs and Tories had just started into existence; when Gustavus Adolphus was warring and Barnevelt expiring, for the same doctrinal casuistries over which his own forefathers were puzzling and canting in their Conventicle in Bunhill Fields:—when James Stuart and Babie Steenie were reigning at Whitehall; and Sir Jacob Meadows, one of the earliest English Baronets, at Meadows Court.

There is something imposing in more than two centuries of family stability. The Crown of England itself has twice been transferred from dynasty to dynasty during that period. Though Hargood had scorned to bestow more

than a passing glance at the finely-emblazoned genealogy which, redeemed from the hands of old Nichols by the present resident, had been replaced in the hall, to denote, in common with its stained-glass windows and the carved escutcheon crowning the mantel, that it was still, though in the occupation of a stranger, an appanage of the family of Meadows, his practised eye did not fail to note that it traced the origin of the race to Saxon times: that under the Norman sceptre, it had intermarried with royalty; that in the Wars of the Roses, it had sacrificed more than one valiant knight to the strifes of king-mongery; and that under the more civilised tyranny of Elizabeth, it had danced at court-revels, and sent martyrs to the Tower. It had done all, in short, which yellow parchments, corroded brasses, and mossy tombstones tend to immortalise in a land, which still,—in spite of the light shed upon its records by Holinshed or Hume, Lingard, Alison or even Macaulay,—has a world of domestic ar-

chives, waiting to be pounded in the mortar of history, and presented in a concrete form to our digestion.

So strong was the impression produced upon the mind of Edward Hargood, that he wandered with far less interest than Amy had expected, through the beautiful shrubberies; so many a favourite spot in which was consecrated by family anecdotes, vainly recounted.—The man of cities, the man of books, was reasoning, not observing.

Though unable to retrace the chain of thought producing these reveries, Amy soon perceived, with woman's readiness, that they were favourable to herself and her family. When he spoke, it was more mildly,—almost deferentially.—He seemed to recognise claims hitherto unappreciated.—Perhaps he was thinking it less inexcusable than he once supposed, in the parents of the heir of those hereditary dignities, to desire that their only son should form an alliance enabling him to substantiate and exalt them.—For when Sir Mark



became the husband of his sister's governess, he had scarcely sufficient income left, to maintain the respectability of his name.

Before they returned to the Rectory, Amy beguiled her uncle into a visit to Radensford Church.—The honourable testimonial destined to keep her father's memory green in the land, would, she thought, confirm his favourable impressions. Alas ! for frail human nature, whether fermenting under the Spartan tunic, Roman toga, Saxon broadcloth, or even a Patent Siphonia, his attention was absorbed by the ancient family monuments ;—barons and dames in coloured alabaster, holding each other at arm's length by the hand, as if about to start for a mazurka ;—recumbent crusaders,—knights of the Shire yeleft Meddhowes,—to say nothing of a privy councillor of that most Christian youthful king, whose effigies by Holbein so strongly resemble those of his bluff and wicked father, with the malice taken out.

A Wroughton Drewe might have examined

this rare collection of monuments, with the curious eye of an archæologist. Edward Hargood contemplated them with a half-scornful, half-gratified, air ; as tokens of the greatness of a house into which his sister had married ; and of which one of the descendants had vainly solicited to become his son-in-law.

Amy Meadows turned aside while he was examining the inscriptions and dates on these storied tombs ; unspeakably mortified at the air of unconcern with which he had surveyed the only one she cared for,—the simple tablet inscribed to the memory of her father.

Meanwhile, by one of those chances said to occur only in the pages of a novel, but more frequently perplexing the progress of actual life, where the Unforeseen is by far the most predominant agent, though Hargood had for the last eight years resided in London without wider excursiōning than a Saturday's holiday now and then to the suburbs, he had not been four-and-twenty hours at a hundred miles' dis-

tance from the metropolis, before his absence became a serious evil.

He had taken precautions as regarded his employers.—He had provided a substitute for his public duties.—To his own family, he had not so much as left his address !

And on the morning following his departure, a letter was brought to his house, superscribed “immediate.”—If absent, the bearer was to follow Mr. Hargood wherever he was most likely to be found.

Mary’s first suggestion to the weazened maid by whom this business-like missive was placed in her hand, was to desire the messenger would carry it on to St. Martin’s Lane, where, at her father’s chambers, his substitute would be found at work. But the woman saw it was time to speak out.

“I’m afraid, Miss, ’twouldn’t be no use.—None but master or yourself could be of any service in this emudgency. I’m sorrow to say one of the young gentlemen’s met with a accident.”

In most cases, she would have called them the "boys."—Sad indeed must be the accident which caused her to invest them with so much dignity!

Mary instantly took the alarm. But so severe was the discipline of the family, that still, she dared not open a letter addressed to her father. The messenger by whom it had been brought, was summoned to be questioned.

It was not much he could relate. He could not even tell whether the elder or younger child were the sufferer. But "one on 'em had had a bad fall, in climbing over the playground wall. His arm was broke; his state alarming!" Mr. Hargood was requested to repair immediately to Hammersmith, to "advise on the measures to be taken."

Within a few minutes, Mary was on her way thither in a cab.—She had summoned all her courage.—She had gathered together the money, little enough, left by her father for

household purposes.—Poor boys!—Poor darlings! She did not dare allow herself to dwell upon *which* might be the one whose life was perhaps in danger.—But Frank was her mother's favourite. She prayed earnestly for Frank.

Arrived at the square red brick house, within iron gates and palisading bearing ACADEMY aloft on a portentous board, Mary was far from courteously welcomed. Mr. Hopson, the proprietor, (*Dr.* Hopson as styled in his prospectus, was a schoolmaster,) a whole schoolmaster, and nothing but a schoolmaster; and he consequently regarded a casualty,—perhaps a death—in the Establishment, as a calamity not only to be deplored, but to be resented.—“The classes were completely interrupted by this unfortunate affair.—The drawing-master had been dismissed for the day.—Order was consequently broken up:—and all because Hargood Minor had chosen to disobey the long-standing regulations of the Establishment,



and climb over the playground wall into the adjoining gardens, in search of green gooseberries,—flowers,—or some such trash.”

“In search perhaps of liberty,” thought Mary. But she said nothing. She had heard the worst. It *was* Frank who was the sufferer.

She now required to be taken to her brother ; and was accordingly ushered up several flights of stairs to the condemned cell or sick room of the Academy ;—a miserable hole, though the object of much ambition among the boys, as securing indemnification from study. The shutters of the curtainless window were closed to exclude the afternoon sunshine. But there was still light enough in the cheerless room to enable her to discover the little form extended on a mattress upon the iron bedstead : with the shattered limb resting on a folded sheet.

Mary was soon on her knees by the bedside.

"Is papa very angry, sister Mary?" murmured the feverish boy.

"No one is angry, darling. Do you suffer much, Frank?"

A deep moan was the reply ;—a moan replete with anguish.

She had already been informed that the Hammersmith surgeon who had quitted his patient only a quarter of an hour previous to her arrival, had stated that it would be impossible for the fracture to be reduced till the swelling of the mangled limb had in some degree subsided. Cold compresses were to be applied ; and in a few hours, he was to return. All she could now do therefore for the sufferer was to instal herself as his nurse ; undertaking to moisten his lips when thirsty :—a considerable relief to Mrs. Hopson, a voluminous middle-aged lady adorned with a chestnut front, and a black lace *coiffure* overgrown with faded sweet peas, who thankfully resigned her occupation. But even Mrs. Hopson though in

accepting the cares of office, she had enlarged in Frank Hargood's hearing on the fitting chastisement inflicted by the justice of Providence on refractory young gentlemen unable to resist the temptations of original sin and green gooseberries, in the teeth of academic rules and regulations, after listening for an hour or two to the suppressed cries of the brave little patient, had refrained from further objurgation.

How much more, then, 'Sister Mary;' who stood listening to his oppressed breathing, and wiping the cold perspiration from his forehead, till her very heart sickened.—Few pangs more grievous in this world, than to watch beside a suffering child, whose torments are beyond one's power of assuagement.—Poor Mary rolled herself up in the nursery chair, with every pulse in her frame beating,—wondering and wondering how this poor little injured frame would ever sustain the torture consequent on setting the doubly-fractured arm; wondering even whether he would outlive so severe a shock on

the constitution ; wondering, above all, where her father could be found, and whether he were likely to return home in time to authorise a consultation.—Every time she bent over the boy, administering to his thirst, or applying the cooling applications ordered, she counted the quarters and the minutes, till the return of the Hammersmith surgeon.

Already, by anticipation, she recoiled from the idea of this man. For it had been whispered to her in his honour, by the lady in the chestnut front, that he was “a tiptop man of the new school, having walked the hospitals in Paris, and been a pupil at the Hôtel Dieu :” and Mary, who had heard it said that this dashing guild of chirurgery was far prouder of its address in removing a limb than of skill in preserving one, trembled at the prospect of a disciple of the iron-handed Dupuytren.

Nor were her alarms groundless.—When evening and the experimental Saw-bones arrived together, he decided, at once, on what appeared to Mary a very cursory examination of the

patient, that amputation must take place. "The nervous system was becoming alarmingly excited:—no time was to be lost."

But when Mary discovered that he had arrived accompanied by his assistant and bringing his bag of instruments, she saw immediately that he had prejudged the case; and firmly opposed his decision.

"It was natural," he said with a nauseous simper, "for ladies to be tender-hearted. She must not think about the business. She must leave the room—had better leave the house, indeed, till all was over.—But she need not be under the least alarm. Chloroform would be employed.—The boy would feel nothing; and his life be happily preserved."

But Mary turned a deaf ear. That right arm, so lightly valued by the operator, was to afford the future means of subsistence to her helpless brother.—It might, perhaps, yet be saved.—Acting on her own judgment, she forbade, in her father's name, any operation to be attempted till her return from town, with



further advice. She would be off immediately, and back within a couple of hours.

The professional man rebelled. The Hopsons looked cross, and seemed perplexed. But as Mary now ventured to pronounce the names of Brodie and Guthrie, they dared not risk any overt act of defiance.

She was soon jogging back again to town in a sluggish hack-cab. But civility and a liberal bribe induced the man to accelerate his pace; and again, she was coiled up musingly, as in the old arm-chair at Hammersmith,—cold and faint though the weather was balmy.—She had not tasted food all day; and a ball of ice seemed lodged in her heart of hearts.—Consciousness seemed almost to have forsaken her when she arrived at the Davenports' door in Spring Gardens, whither she had desired to be driven. If any one in London knew her father's address, it was likely to be his benefactor.

“My lord was dining out—my lady and Miss Davenport, having dined early, were out

for a walk in St. James's Park," was all the answer she could obtain.

In the heaviness of her misery, Mary, in an humble tone, asked leave to wait;—and the old hall-porter, believing her at first to be a tradesperson appointed by my lady, readily consented.—Scarcely, however, had she seated herself on one of the hall-chairs, when the same "old experience" that endows with "prophetic vein" statesmen and editors, and with a detective policeman's eye a vigilant old porter, induced him to throw open the door of the only uninhabited chamber in the house,—that of Marcus. And there, in that little Zoar, poor Mary and her tears took refuge.

Had she possessed one faculty disengaged from terror of the edge of the surgeon's knife and grating of his saw, she would have noticed the beautiful landscape so prized of old; and recognised that she was in the private room of "Marcus, Marcus."—But her eyes were blinded with sorrow; and in the porches of her cars sounded only that perpetual, mean-

ingless murmur, which an eminent writer has likened to the sound of sand pouring eternally through the great hour-glass of Time.

Twilight had come,—dusk,—almost darkness, before the door opened and Lady Davenport and her daughter approached her:—at first, with curiosity,—soon, with the deepest interest.

Concisely, and self-contained, she told her name and errand.

“I thought,” she said, “that, failing all other sources of information, my father’s address might perhaps be known to Lord Davenport,—by whom he has been lately much befriended.—I was almost in hopes that, through my Aunt Meadows, it might be known to your ladyship.”

Lady Davenport professed her utter ignorance.

“To-morrow’s post,” she said, “might perhaps bring information from Radensford.”

“To-morrow!” cried Mary, clasping her

hands—"when even to-night, it is almost too late!"

"If to know it be of such moment, my dear Miss Hargood," said Lady Davenport, a little startled, "I will instantly despatch a servant to my son. He is dining at no great distance, in Richmond Terrace."

"Yes, yes—for Mercy's sake!" exclaimed Mary; and between broken sobs, she now explained with deep feeling to her sympathising companions, the origin of her anxiety.—  
"My brother will suffer agony all night,—perhaps have to undergo amputation,—perhaps death, (my poor little brother)!" said she—  
"unless I can obtain my father's sanction to calling in better advice."

"But why wait?—Why not instantly take down Brodie to the school where you say this poor unfortunate child is lying?" said Lady Davenport, with earnest sympathy.

Mary answered only by her tears. But they reminded her hearers that whatever the kindness and energy of her heart, she was not a

free agent. She had sunk down again, powerless, into a chair, to wait for Lord Davenport's answer; and her paleness and faintness were so manifest, that Lady Davenport pressed upon her with motherly thoughtfulness, offers of refreshment. Though Mary silently shook her head, tea was brought:—(again tea, in presence of the old Himalayan landscape!) And to satisfy them, she took a cup into her hand. But it was soon set down untasted. The choking in her throat rendered it impossible to swallow.

The moment the sound of an arrival in the hall reached her ears, she started up, refreshed. —Lord Davenport's messenger. No!—Lord Davenport's self!—She rushed towards him, as if to welcome a friend. A hurried pencil-line from his mother despatched by the servant, had imperfectly acquainted him with her errand.

“You judged very rightly in supposing I might assist you, dear Miss Hargood,” said he, while cordially pressing her hand,—all



joy,—all amazement at finding her under his own roof.—“Mr. Hargood informed me before he left London that he was about to visit Radensford, for a family consultation with his sister.”

“Then his advice or consent will come too late !” exclaimed Mary, relapsing into despair.

“You must not wait for it,” interposed Lady Davenport.—“You must act on your own judgment, and I am sure you can never act amiss,” she kindly added. Then, in as few words as possible, she explained to her son the previous origin of Mary’s affliction.

“Not a moment must be lost !” cried he, almost before she came to a conclusion. “You, mother, will I am sure accompany Miss Hargood back to Hammersmith.”

“I have already ordered the carriage for that purpose,” was Lady Davenport’s prompt reply.

“And I will hasten to Brodie or Guthrie, and send on the first man of eminence whose

services I can procure. Let nothing be done till he arrives.—I will then telegraph for Hargood. Or stay!” said he, reflecting that, if the first surgical advice were secured, the temporary absence of that stern-minded individual might be a benefit.—“He would, perhaps, be disabled by the shock of a too sudden communication. We have still time for the express-train. I will hurry down to Radensford and fetch him at once.”

No further need to recommend the object of his preference to the protection of his mother. He saw, at once, that the good sense and good feeling of Mary had made instant way with one, whose natural sense and feeling were equally genuine.

## CHAPTER VII.

THANKFUL was the poor, worn, and broken-spirited girl to Lady Davenport, for leaving her to her silent reflections, the whole way from London to Hammersmith. — Her return had been anxiously expected; but when news transpired in the Establishment that little Hargood's sister had come back in a "coronet carriage" accompanied by a live ladyship, Mrs. Hopson, in a state of nervous consternation, exchanged her sweet peas for a blonde cap of the first magnitude, prepared to be as fussy as she had been hitherto neglectful.

Lady Davenport took little heed of her

importunities. She was absorbed in watching the silent joy of the poor suffering little fellow, when sister Mary again kneeled down beside him; and by her well-understood and almost maternal croonings and questionings, afforded comfort to *him*, while she satisfied herself that no unsatisfactory change had taken place.

Before she had risen from her knees, one of the most eminent of London surgeons, apprised by Lord Davenport of the urgency of the case, made his appearance; and the local Esculapius having been already summoned, speedily arrived, *minus* a cubit of his stature.

From the consultation, Mary and her friend were of course excluded; but even in the adjoining chamber to which, having declined the honour of the state-parlour below, they were hastily conducted, the shrieks of the poor boy when the mangled limb, from which the bone was protruding, was handled and examined, were terrible to hear, even to the less interested of the two.

The consultation lasted long—*very* long,—to Mary's feelings interminably.—She could scarcely control her anguish. A mother's feelings were stirring in that young heart !

Now, had Mary Hargood been required to propitiate the mother of Hugh and Marcus in the common course of events, she would probably have spared no effort to make the best of herself and her belongings, in order to produce a favourable impression. But here, in the attic of a third-rate boarding school, with bare boards, a long-snuffed tallow candle, and a few miserable tenantless stump-bedsteads by way of furniture, disregardless of everything around her, even of Lady Davenport herself, she was grappling that kind woman to her heart with hooks of steel.—She went up to her once or twice, interrupting herself as she hurriedly paced the room ; not to apologise for the inconvenience to which she was putting so great a lady ; but to seize her hand for sympathy and support, as a woman, a mother, a fellow Christian,—when



the poor child's cries grew fainter and fainter. At length, poor Mary's heart grew fainter than all; and for the first time in her life, she sank in an all but death-like swoon, upon one of those wretched beds.

Lady Davenport assisted her unaided:—for she knew that the help she would fain have called for, was wanted in the adjoining room. But while bathing her temples with water luckily at hand, and loosening her collar and waistband, she could not resist imprinting a tearful kiss upon her forehead,—a kiss that accepted her at once and for ever as her adopted daughter.

When Mary recovered her consciousness, her head was resting on the bosom of Lady Davenport; and before her, were the two surgeons, cheerful and at ease. What pleasant intelligence they had to communicate!—The limb was set,—the patient doing well.—No fear or chance of an amputation. The stilling of the boy's cries had arisen from the influence of chloroform.

And now came anxious suggestions that Mary should return home at once with Lady Davenport. "Ill and overcome as she was, her presence could be of no possible service."

"Not to *him*, perhaps, but to *me*. I *could* not leave him. I should suffer more at a distance. And though you say his sleep is assured by opiates, should he wake and not find my hand ready to meet his own, he would feel *too* lonely.—No!—you must really allow me to stay."

Her arguments prevailed; though of course it would have been pleasanter to the Hopsons to consign the sick-room for the night to darkness and neglect.

"Since you will not come with me, good-night, then, my dear child," said Lady Davenport, bestowing upon her a parting embrace. "Compose yourself as far as is possible under such sad circumstances. To-morrow morning, doubtless, your father will be brought back by my son."

Lord Davenport would have been edified could he have learned on his way down to Radensford, by spirit-rapping, electric acupuncture, or any other of those miraculous modern processes which render "Every Man,"—even the most cloddish and material, "his own Prospero,"—the table-talk which followed his hasty exit from the dinner-table, at Richmond Terrace, before the claret had completed its first round.

It was not opera-night; so that there was no plea for one of those apologetic nods with which the fashionable melomaniac signals the master of the house along his dinner-table, on Tuesdays or Saturdays, before his cab-horse is heard starting off at the rate of twelve miles an hour, to be in time for the *aria d' entrata* of the *prima donna* of the night.

"Let us hope," said one of the Cruxleyan set, as soon as the door had closed after him, "that Davenport has not taken up the dodge of sending for himself away from dinner-parties, like Sir Quinine Flam, or Swainson of

the Blues, who pays a guinea a dozen to Barry for scented envelopes, directed to himself in the tenderest of handwritings.”

“You don’t know Davenport.—Billet-doux are quite out of his line!” mumbled old Cruvey. “I’ll answer for it he has been sent for to Coldbath Fields, to some felon wanting to turn Queen’s evidence by a ‘full and ample confession.’—Davenport has invented a moral emetic for the use of the Model Prisons, which compels a man to clear his conscience, will-he, nill-he.”

“More likely,” observed old Wormwood, the literary Thug, “his presence has been required at the private view of some political autopsy, in the proof sheets of a certain leading journal. I hear there is some wholesale butchery in hand.”

“You talk after the desires of your own heart, my dear Wormwood!” rejoined the Cruxleyan.—“Davenport may be a crotchety fellow and a party man; but he would not kill a midge, as you are always endeavouring to slay

eagles,—by the wind of a spent pen!—I found Jack Beresford reading one of your reviews this morning at the Carlton; and though he took all the fences, (as he calls skipping the uncut pages) he was as much affected by the *malus animus* exuding from your article, as a dog by the carbonic-acid-gas in the Grotta del Cane. I was obliged to call for a glass of Curaçoa for him; or your malice might have made another victim besides poor \*\*\*\*\*!”

“Like Tom Thumb, my dear lord,” rejoined Wormwood, with cynical self-possession, “when I unmask literary impostors,

I do my duty,—and I do no more.

Let angry authors be as resentful as they please,—

Nitor in adversum; nec me, qui cetera vincit  
Impetus, et rapido contrarius Euchor orbi.”

“Away with him, away with him, he speaks (false) Latin!” cried the Cruxleyan, in the heroic vein of Jack Cade.

“Why not?—I seldom hear *you* speak



English!" retorted Wormwood; who prided himself on being one of those narrow-minded purists, who would fain surround the language that embodies our hourly amplifying knowledge and experience, with an iron barrier; like that of the fortifications by which Louis Philippe attempted to compulse the good city of Paris, which ended by expulsing himself.

"Truly," retorted the angry Cruxleyan, "it is tolerably good Saxon which describes a certain critic as

Best of all he males

To butcher, and mangle, and scarify females;

If he can't find a woman, his talent will show it

The best in abusing some very great poet:—\*

or a good fellow whose back is turned, like Davenport."

"I wonder," insinuated old Cruvey, who had reasons of his own for disliking the personal turn the conversation was taking, inasmuch as, having officiated half his life as *souffre-douleur* to Wormwood, he knew

\* *Vide* "Verdicts."

he should become the scapegoat of his vengeance, later in the evening, at the Carlton.—“ I wonder whether Davenport will ever marry ?”

“ I’m sure I hope so,” answered the Cruxleyan.—“ Davenport’s the sort of fellow of whom slips ought to be taken,—a man willing to do everybody’s business besides his own ;—to belong to all sorts and conditions of committees ;—poke his nose into every description of abuse ;—promote every species of inquiry ;—sift public charities to the bottom of their strong box, and subscribe to private ones !—Davenport is a phenomenon compounded of Philanthropist Howard, Henry Brougham, and Joseph Hume, sweetened with a small spoonful of Mrs. Fry.”

“ I’m told,” rejoined Cruvey, as he filled his glass, “ that young Eustace, who has so strangely cast his slough, after making the discovery that he has a country as well as a soul to save, is about to marry Davenport’s sister.”

“ Is he ?—So much the better. These

political puritans ought to intermarry, like the Jews, to maintain the immaculacy of the race ; or we shall be having them disappear, like golden pippins or Albemarle spaniels.—Billy Eustace is more than half a good fellow, though, in his way. Billy was one of *us*, till he got bit by Davenport ; and Barfont Abbey hasn't been the same place since he made his recantation. However, I suppose we shall have him back again, when love and politics drop him down upon *terra firma* ; like the old tortoise in the fable carried up into the sky by a brace of eagles."

While they thus praised and scandalized him, Lord Davenport was pursuing his way into Gloucestershire, "straight as an arrow from a Tartar's bow," and nearly as rapidly.—Having arrived at Cardington at an hour when nothing is welcome or provided for but mail-bags, he took a couple of hours' rest and refreshment before he proceeded to Radensford ; satisfied that the longer Edward Hargood's interference between his mother and Mary and the sick child, was deferred, the better for all parties.

And this opinion was considerably strengthened after his interview with the individual in question. Hargood received the intelligence of his child's misfortune with frowns rather than tears: enlarging upon the accident as a most offensive proof of the want of care and discipline in Dr. Hopson's establishment, without once adverting to the sufferings of the boy.—

“ Frank might be maimed for life: a cripple thrown on the hands of his family: a burthen to himself and others.”—The practical-minded father talked himself in short into a fit of indignation, which sounded very much as if he were about to bring an action for damages against Providence.

In such a mood of mind, it was clear that his company back to town would have been far from recreative; and Lord Davenport was thankful when, after an insinuation of surprise that his lordship should have taken the trouble of coming when a letter would have served the purpose quite as well, Hargood proposed that he should at least remain and pass

the day with his aunt and cousin, to console them for *his* abrupt departure:—a hint of wishing to make the journey alone, which his young patron readily accepted.

When, therefore, Amy and her mother made their appearance for the day, they found Mr. Hargood departed, and a new guest installed at the Rectory breakfast-table: a guest they dearly loved, and who was far more congenial with the taste of its venerable master than the dogmatic Hargood.—The name of Hugh Davenport was familiar to him, moreover, as brother to the friend of his late son-in-law; by whom, on her departure from India, the interests and comfort of his widowed Rachel had been chiefly provided for. More concerning Marcus, she had of course never confided to her father.

That poor little Frank's sufferings met with far deeper sympathy from Lady Meadows and Amy than from his own father, did not surprise Lord Davenport.—Both were full of compassion; not for the boy alone, but for his kind-hearted sister.—It touched him to the soul to



hear them describe her more than maternal sacrifices to those boys:—her provident care,—her sisterly love.—The hope that he was perhaps about to put an end to her domestic troubles, and secure peace and prosperity to her and them, almost produced a betrayal of his feelings.

The road from Radensford to Meadowes Court seemed now the allotted daily walk of Amy ; for Lord Davenport naturally declined a proposed drive in the Rector's pony-chaise to see the lions of the neighbourhood, in favour of a saunter with his cousin.—He wanted to talk to her of Mary, unlistened to by the elders of the family. Amy was more likely to prove *sympatica* with his bursts of enthusiasm,—more likely to render him familiar with her cousin's tastes and predilections, to which it might shortly be his happy lot to administer.

Full of Mary—full of his own prospects—a lover, in short, in every sense of the word, he was naturally less alive than even her uncle had been to the beauties of the forest

of Burdans. As to the avenue, instead of bursting into the transports for which her partial heart was prepared, Lord Davenport prosaically stated his general objections to the beech. Oak or elm, he thought, from their longevity, were the only trees for avenues.

“But they never form, by the interlacing of their upshooting boughs, a Gothic aisle like *this*?” cried Amy, when they reached the beautiful shady path, sheltered as by the groined arches of a cathedral.

Again, however, Hugh, the utilitarian, objected to a close avenue:—“always damp in summer, and in winter impassable.”—He still obstinately adhered to oak and elm, planted at sufficient distances to admit the free passage of light and air to the road they border.

Amy was getting almost angry.—A fault found with Meadows Court, seemed in *her* ears a sacrilege.—Still greater was her vexation when she began to perceive that this Cousin Hugh, whom she had hitherto found so brotherly

and affectionate, was far more interested in the spot they were visiting as the present and future residence of his friend Eustace, than as the home of his mother's childhood, or as her own birth-place!—He kept enlarging on the improvements he should make, “were *he* Eustace,” and “the changes he should strenuously suggest to Eustace, on his return to town;” as if he had totally forgotten that this beautiful estate, so dear to her, was long supposed to be her own.

“After all, it is but natural,” mused poor Amy, as Lord Davenport stalked across the grass, to examine the facilities afforded for draining the lower portion of the paddock, which the suppression of the moat, as a reservoir, had rendered unusually swampy. “*He* looks upon the poor old place as his sister's future residence. *He* already beholds Olivia installed in these delicious gardens!”

After his survey of the mansion itself, Lord Davenport spoke out more freely: alluding openly to “the time when Eustace would bring

down a wife, and make the house more comfortable."

"I should not be surprised," said he, "if, on his father's death, he left Horndean Court entirely to the occupation of Lady Louisa and his sisters.—That unfortunate business of the eldest daughter has given his mother such a shock, that she will never return to London; and she is fond of Horndean,—which Eustace detests. Situated in the midst of a stately, formal neighbourhood, thirty miles from a railroad, and a hundred miles behind the progress of civilisation, he fancies he should be much happier here, within a pleasant distance of town and immediate reach of fox-hounds."

Amy was silent. *Those* were not the grounds on which she wanted Meadows Court to be preferred. The place possessed inherent merits, which she thought deserved some share in his approbation. She ventured, at last, to remark that she had formerly heard Mr. Eustace declare himself to be thoroughly sick of London.

“As a man of pleasure, I grant you, he had become, as they all do in their turn, completely *blasé*.—How should it be otherwise?—London is of all cities the one least adapted to a mere sensualist:—all its luxuries imported,—from claret and *pâté de Strasburg*, to French plays and Italian operas.—But Eustace, thank Heaven, has outlived that miserable phase of his existence. Eustace has acquired a purpose in life: no longer the lazy, lounging, lanky fellow, who found life ‘a bore,’ and its sayings and doings ‘*bosh*.’—You would scarcely know him, Amy.—There is not a man on earth I value more highly.”

His cousin would have given worlds for courage to allude explicitly to his projected marriage with Olivia, as the probable cause of this transformation. But allusion to the subject was impossible. It was pleasanter to let her cousin proceed with his enthusiastic recountal of the golden opinions which his friend had recently won, both in public and private life. “And what I particularly admire in him,”



added Lord Davenport, "is the tact with which he has incorporated himself into rational society, without breaking with the set which, however frivolous and vexatious they may now appear in his eyes, were once his bosom friends and hospitable entertainers. I sometimes wonder, Amy," said he, with the utmost carelessness, snatching from a thicket, as he passed, the first dog-rose of the year, and offering it to his cousin,—“I sometimes wonder how you escaped falling in love with Eustace. For I know that, at one time, he admired you exceedingly. However, marriages, they say, are made in Heaven !”

And before Amy could find breath to reply to this direct attack, he had plunged *in medias res* of a full avowal of his own passion for Mary Hargood, and his intention to offer her his hand.

Startled beyond measure, Amy had no longer the smallest inclination to recur to William Eustace. She both loved and valued her Cousin Mary; and her expressions of joy were as

warm as the occasion required.—She seized Lord Davenport by the hand, and thanked him as cordially for having appreciated the merit of her friend, as though it had been a kindness done to herself.—Still, the woman,—the *girl*,—predominated.—She kept ever and anon stopping short to accuse herself of blindness and stupidity, in not having at once discovered his prepossession, from the endless inquiries he had addressed to her throughout the winter, touching Mary's occupations and sentiments :—then flying off to a thousand anecdotes of Mary's excellence and self-abnegation.—It was a subject which neither of them was likely to grow weary of discussing.

“But how is all this to be settled with Marcus?” exclaimed Amy, suddenly pausing in their pleasant plan-makings. “Surely you are aware of his attachment to Mary?”

“Shall I surprise you much by telling you that, only four days ago, I received a letter from him, written in utter ignorance of my projects, and suggesting her to me as a wife?”

“*Marcus?*—Only six months ago, so passionately in love with her!”

“Only six months ago, deliberately *rejected* by her. You do not know my brother as I do; or you would be aware of the influence of such a fact on the sensitiveness of his self-love. The world scarcely holds the woman he would not prefer to a girl who had calmly declined his hand and resisted his attractions.—But it seems that, in describing the individual she considered suited to her as a partner for life, Miss Hargood sketched an ideal which Marcus declares to be my life-like portrait:—and such is his estimate of her excellence, that, since he cannot obtain her as a wife, he insists upon having her for a sister-in-law.”

Amy could not forbear a passing tribute to the singular good-fortune which seemed to throw every advantage into the hands of her cousin.

“There is a person of your acquaintance,” resumed Lord Davenport, following his own line of reflection, “whom it would never surprise

me to see resume over Marcus an ascendancy which long preceded his passion for Mary Hargood—”

“Mr. Henderson’s daughter?”

“Why not say Sylvester Burton’s wife and widow,—for it was in that position she won his boyish affections!—I remember when his letters from India were filled with ravings about this gentle, patient, tender Rachel Burton; and, but that personal extravagance had so injured his income as to render marriage just then impossible, he would certainly have offered her his hand.”

“The attachment could scarcely be very strong, which did not prevent his falling in love, at first sight, with Mary!”

“Like all over-impressionable people, Marcus is fickle; and long absence, and the imprudence of the whole affair, had probably effected their usual consequences. But I suspect that, at the bottom of his heart, there has always abided a leaning towards the ‘*premier amour*’ to which, the song says ‘*on revient toujours*;’—based

perhaps on his conviction that the attachment was mutual."

Amy, to whom her mother had confided only a moderate portion of Rachel Burton's confessions, was a little surprised.—But Marcus and his caprices had long lost their paramount interest in her mind. The spell was broken. This further proof of the instability of his character only served to renew her self-gratulations that she had *not* broken, but gradually unlinked her chain.

Ere they regained the house, Lord Davenport exacted a promise from her that, at present, all these plans and surmises should be reserved from her mother.

"Let everything be satisfactorily arranged," said he, "before she hears a word about the matter. My dear aunt is so kind-hearted, that should any disappointment arise to frustrate my hopes, it would distress her affectionate nature. She has had plagues enough in life. We must all henceforward do our best, Amy, to keep her well, and make her happy."



## CHAPTER VIII.

AT an earlier hour, the morning following poor Frank's disaster, than the interview took place between his father and Lord Davenport, Olivia, escorted by Madame Winkelried, and bringing a plentiful supply of forced fruit and other pleasant gifts for the little sufferer, made her appearance at Hammersmith : the Hopsons, male and female, who had refused ingress into the sick-room, the preceding day, even to little Ned, being now prepared to admit the whole House of Lords, had it thought proper to present itself.

Grateful indeed for these gifts was the solitary watcher ;—for the sick child, though proceeding favourably, complained of intolerable

thirst.—But still more grateful was she for the affectionate greetings of Olivia, and the motherly counsels of the good-hearted German, who, in a sick room, seemed in her element. Before they quitted it, the surgeons arrived; and a highly satisfactory report was the result of their consultation.

And now, again left alone, poor Mary began to look forward with terror to her father's arrival, so anxiously desired the preceding day.—She felt certain of having incurred his displeasure. She had either involved him in heavy expenses, or in alarming obligations towards the Davenports; and if he recoiled from merely accepting a place under Government on the recommendation of the young lord, how was he likely to submit, even for a time, to be indebted to him in the frightful amount of a surgeon's fee!

She turned sick at the thoughts of his displeasure; and but that, while she dwelt upon it, her ear was released from the piteous moans of that suffering boy, by which yesterday she

had been distracted, her courage would have failed her.

But *that* sufficed. Let her father rage as he might, the child was relieved,—the child, thank Heaven, was safe.

After many weary hours, the creaking of boots on the crazy old attic staircase renewed the beating of her heart. And well it might; for scarcely were the first greetings exchanged between her and her father, when he began to lecture poor little Frank on his disobedience, and herself for having so superfluously intruded their family affairs upon the Davenports.

He brought intelligence, however, which almost reconciled her to his rebukes.—The result of his journey was decisive. He had made up his mind to accept the offered place: and was about to return home for the purpose of despatching to Spring Gardens an answer to that effect. It was clear, alas! to Mary, from his present mood of mind, that he was likely to intimate to Lord Davenport that, having made cautious inquiries into his lordship's character,

he found him possessed of such qualities as intitled him to become his patron ; in other words that, having ascertained him to be right-minded, humane, learned, charitable and pious, he, Edward Hargood, consented to accept obligations at his hands.

No matter !—A being so generous as Lord Davenport, would overlook the eccentricities of a really good and able man. The essential was that the yoke was removed from her father's neck, and the goad from the sides of her young brothers ; and the remainder of that day was one of comparative peace and rest to Mary.

The night that followed it, however, was less satisfactory. According to the usual reaction, feverish symptoms rendered the little patient restless, and necessitated constant watchfulness. On the morrow, therefore, when Mr. Hargood made his appearance, he was exceedingly displeased ; both at the languor of the exhausted child, which he attributed to the peaches and grapes forwarded by Lady Davenport ; and at the pale cheeks and anxious eyes of his daughter.

“If things went on so badly,” he said, “he should be obliged, in spite of the arduous business he was just then compelled to wind up, and the new duties into which he was about to be initiated, to come and establish himself at Hammersmith, till his son’s cure was completed.”

At this hint, Mary did indeed bestir herself to look well and cheerful; for she felt that her father’s enthronement in the sick-room would convey a sentence of death to one or both his children.—The remainder of the Ilford Castle fruit was instantly despatched down to little Ned, to be shared with his rough-headed school-fellows.

But to her father’s visit succeeded one which was indeed consoling. Scarcely had the sick chamber been set in order, and refreshed for the day, when Lady Davenport was seated by the bedside in the great nursing-chair; looking, with her widow’s weeds and serene countenance, the picture of a Sister of Mercy. Having whispered off the sick child into a doze, she



began to relate to Mary her son's visit to Meadowes Court;—to talk of Amy and her mother; and above all, of Henstead Vicarage—of her good old grandfather, of whom the sick boy was the namesake:—and of the venerable widowed grandmother who, once a year in the childhood of Gertrude Meadowes, used to visit Gloucestershire for a peep at the dear Mary who was slaving for her support.

“I was very, very fond of old Mrs. Hargood,” added Lady Davenport.—“I sometimes almost envied Mary her mother; who was far milder than mine. I felt that, for *her*, I would have done all Mary was doing.”

From one so reserved as Lady Davenport, such remarks as these were a greater proof of confidence than Mary could then understand.—But she was thankful to her for placing her family in so pleasant a light; and strange to tell, she heard more of her relations during the ensuing half-hour, than, during her whole preceding life, she had heard from her father. But for the sour portraits in his writing-room, she

might have had some reason indeed for surmising that she was the daughter of a foundling.

When taking leave, after a long visit, Lady Davenport ventured to remark on the cold hand and pallid cheeks of her young friend.

“You must not be completely shut up in this close room, my dear Miss Hargood,” said she. “If to-morrow should prove a good day with our poor little patient, you must take a short airing, with Olivia and her brother.—They will call for you at about this hour; and Madame Winkelried shall bring some picture-books, and assume your place here till you return.—Don’t be afraid to trust her.—She is the best old soul in the world.—Ask Hugh and Marcus through how many influenzas and sore throats she has nursed them.”

Mary accepted, and was grateful. What Lady Davenport proposed could not fail to be right and good; and *she* at least knew better than to decline any friendly overtures made to her all but friendless little brother.

She was still stationed at the window of the old lofty attic, peering down into the court below, to see the last of the departing carriage in which Olivia had been sitting waiting for her mother. And as it disappeared through the huge iron gates, she felt as if she had lost a friend.

In the centre of the small court-yard or front-garden, constituting the *cour d'honneur* of the Academy, grew an aged cedar; such as may be seen in almost every suburban garden on the northern banks of the Thames, derived from the nursery of Sir Hans Sloane in the old Physic Garden at Chelsea:—a melancholy-looking tree, apparently moulting, so spare was its verdure and so grey the moss encumbering its upper branches out of reach of the gardener's ladder.

Into the heart of this dreary tree, which had as completely overgrown the little garden as the celebrated American parsnip the garden-well in which it had accidentally taken root,—did Mary look down; noting the happy birds

flitting among its branches as cheerily as though it had been a huge rose-tree, blooming in the gardens of Damascus.

While moralising on their gaiety and her own dejection, for which she called herself severely to account as unbecoming a moment bringing gladness to the whole family, she leaned against the open window-frame, to inhale the delicious fragrance of early summer, from the sweetbriars and honeysuckles of surrounding shrubberies; and in spite of herself, tears came into her eyes while reflecting on the grievous disproportion of birth between herself and her new friends: not as likely to influence *their* feelings towards herself, but as certain to provoke the surly arrogance, which her father mistook for greatness of mind.

Before those tears had gathered strength to fall, however, the sound of a light footstep caused her suddenly to turn round; and Lord Davenport, already in the room, was instantly by her side.

He had probably met his mother's carriage,

and, on learning that Miss Hargood was alone, keeping watch over the slumbering patient, had found it impossible to wait for the appointed meeting of the following day.—On presenting himself for admittance, the “Open Sesame” of his coronet procured him of course a ready entrance into Hopsonia.

Is it fair to relate what followed? Is it fair to describe the influence exercised over a heart, for the first time desperately in love, by the sight of two large expressive eyes, “each about to have a tear,” but lighted up with sudden joy at sight of the intruder?—Even the obtuse Laird of Dumbiedikes admitted the irresistibility of Jeanie Deans, when her eyes glanced “like lamour beads” under the effects of the same touching suffusion; and so it was that the evident despondency of Mary Hargood forced from the tender-hearted Lord Davenport a full avowal of his passion and his hopes, at least four-and-twenty hours before prudence and propriety warranted the confession.

The spot was strangely chosen for it:—that



meagre attic,—that cheerless prospect:—how little in accordance with the noble position of the one,—with the graceful refinement of mind of the other!—Yet then and there were those few words mutually spoken, which reciprocally explained to both the emotions of their hearts; and cemented them to each other, for time and for eternity.

To find her pale, nervous, tremulous, so completely upset the sage intentions of poor Hugh, that cold-blooded wisdom preached in vain.—Blessings on his low-voiced exhortations, and gentle endearments!—Blessings on the opiates which caused little Frank to sleep on and on, through the afternoon; till the birds began to hover round their nests in the topmost branches of the mossy old cedar.—There was, however, still light enough for Lord Davenport to discover upon the no longer faded cheeks of his own dear Mary, the soft bloom, like the delicate lining of a sea-shell, which denoted the awakened sensibility of her long-reserved nature.

“Your kindness,” said she, “has averted the only drawback that could have embittered my personal prospects of happiness.—You have so altered the position of the family, that I am no longer wanted at home.—Do not think me ungracious if I own that I shall be all the happier as your wife, from knowing that I shall not be missed by my brothers or father.”

Just so would Lord Davenport have had her think and feel.—Not a thought or sentiment of Mary’s that he could not echo from the bottom of his heart.

When they parted,—for the poor little fellow could not sleep for ever, and became clamorous for water or lemonade,—it was agreed that the driving-party should still take place on the morrow. In the interim, he was to apply to her father, (already installed in his new office,) for his sanction to his addresses.

“I will not conceal from you, dear Mary,” said he, “that among my recent satisfactions has been an observation made to me by Mr. Hargood on accepting the appointment which

Government enabled me to offer him. ‘If,’ he said, ‘your lordship’s patronage has any ulterior views involving my daughter,—in plain English, if you expect that Mary will, at some future time, become the wife of your brother Marcus, I owe it to all parties to say that her feelings towards him are unchanged. She has clearly proved to me that between them there exists a total incompatibility of temper and character.’—Now as all the world is of opinion that no two human beings were ever more dissimilar than myself and Mark, I could not help hoping, darling, that, where White had been rejected, Black might possibly have a chance.”

Poor little Ned Hargood, when he stole in for a moment to wish his sister and sick brother good-night, ere he repaired to his truckle-bed, could scarcely make out what was come to Mary. She strained him so earnestly to her heart,—she mingled something so much like a maternal benediction with her usual kiss! Nay, unless he was much mistaken, tears had

fallen from her eyes upon his cheek.—Why should she cry *now*, he wondered, when Frank was out of pain and pronounced to be completely out of danger?

Could any of the many-daughtered London dowagers who, for the last ten years, had been paying their addresses to the heir of Ilford Castle and his coronet,—aided by the means and appliances of balls and dinners,—picnics and Greenwich parties,—operas and French plays,—have surmised how little is required to bring a man to the point of proposal when once he has got his own consent to be married, they might have kept their money in their pockets; and Mitchell, the Trafalgar, and the Star and Garter, have been considerably the losers.

The quiet indolent Hugh had become, on a sudden, twice as impetuous as Mark; like the still water which, having once overleapt the dam, dashes on in headlong vigour.—Sir Gardner Dalmaine, who met him that evening in the lobby of the House of Commons, in search of his *fidus Achates* Billy Eustace, to confide

to him the secret of his approaching happiness, protests to this day that on shaking hands with him and inquiring after his health, Lord Davenport replied with evident aberration of intellect, "Yes, for ever and ever." But previous to this Malvolio-like exhibition, having rashly voted in a division of the Lords, for which the vigilant Whip laid violent hands upon him, and to which he had previously pledged himself, he is said, like Sir Francis Wronghead in the play, to have cried "Ay" when he ought to have cried "No."—His worst friend, in short, could hardly have hoped to see him more desperately in love.

Poor little Frank Hargood had no fault to find with the arrangement which brought the good-humoured old Trot, Madame Winkelried, the following afternoon, to relieve the sick guard of sister Mary; provided as she was with strawberries and cherries,—with Otto Spechter's charming story-books, and the still better, nay best in the world, tales for one of his years, Miss Edgworth's Parents' Assis-



tant. When the old lady proposed to read aloud to him the incomparable story of *Lazy Lawrence*, it must have required, on Mary's part, a considerable inclination towards the company of Olivia and her brother who were impatiently waiting for her, or perhaps towards the grassy shady glades of Richmond Park to which they were bound, to seduce her from remaining one of the audience.

Lord Davenport was the bearer of a letter from her father; a letter of unqualified and gratified consent to his proposal.—He could not, however, refrain from observing that, as the mutual understanding between the young couple must have been of some duration, he felt that he might have been earlier consulted; adding, that Mary must dispense with his coming in person, to congratulate her, as the business of his new office had paramount claims upon his time.

Lord Davenport could have told her, had he chosen, when a smile overspread her features at this last piece of information, that already Mr.

Hargood was assuming the cut, and jargon, of an office man. Eight-and-forty hours within the walls of the Treasury had set their mark upon the middle-aged novice.

They had a charming drive. A still pleasanter walk followed. The parks have been denominated, even in the grave ears of Parliament, the "lungs of London." But what name ought to be applied to those shady groves of Richmond, which, from the days of Strawberry Hill and Kitty Clive, till now, have annually favoured the flirtations of so many happy couples? The charming cavatina sung by Madame Damereau in *L'Ambassadrice*

Que ces lieux coquets,  
S'ils n'étaient discrets,  
Diraient des secrets,

would be far more appropriate to the Richmond avenues, than to the diplomatic box. Few happier, perhaps, among them, than the pair who now wandered there, forming fabulous plans of future felicity. Olivia, who with

the consciousness of seventeen, began to perceive that she should prove a pleasanter companion at a dozen yards' distance than close by their side, was of opinion that never in her life had she seen two human faces so thoroughly radiant.

It seemed hard to Hugh that, for some days to come, their interviews must be of this public nature, as well as of limited duration.—But it had been already decided, and sanctioned by the surgeons, that as soon as the sick boy could be with safety removed in a bed-carriage, he and his brother were to anticipate by a week the Midsummer holidays, and all the world was to be happy.

“And never, I trust, again to return to durance and discomfort with those Hopsons,—the most wretched toadies I ever met with!” said Lord Davenport. “When I have won a little on your father’s confidence, dearest Mary, and he begins to treat me like a son-in-law, I shall persuade him to let me place Frank at Woolwich, with a view to the Engineers :—his

wall-scaling propensities pointing him out as likely do an honour to the service. — As to our grave little Ned, there is a tolerable living within three miles of Ilford, that will be the very thing for him. Mr. Hargood will scarcely object to render hereditary in the family, his own father's profession."

How happy was Mary to hear him talk thus thoughtfully! — Those dear boys, whose precarious destiny had so often kept her pillow sleepless; were about to be as kindly cared for as herself! —

When the appointed day arrived for their removal from Hammersmith, in spite of the restless desire of the only half-convalescent child to be gone, Mary almost regretted to take leave of the little, close, miserable attic, which had been to *her* more than the stateliest chamber of the noblest palace; more than the Tribune at Florence, — more than the Golden Saloon at Augsburg.

She rather dreaded the cold square room in Pulteney Street, with its Beccarian Rewards and

Punishments, and old black leather table, groaning under uncut duodecimos,—corpses for literary dissection.

But what had become of them all?—When the disabled child, carefully raised from the carriage by Lady Davenport's towering footman, was laid upon the most comfortable sofa ever invented by Dowbiggen, she looked round, and no longer recognised her former home. The writing-table was (by a consent with difficulty wrung out of *Paterfamilias*) shunted into a corner: to make way for a sociable-looking round table, cheered by a vase of flowers from Ilford Castle, arranged by the delicate hands of Olivia; with several choice new volumes, and gifts and treasures innumerable, not offered by the bridegroom elect, but by his rejoicing mother.

“How could she do enough,” she said, “to testify her gratitude to one who was about to confer happiness for life on the dearest and worthiest of sons!”



## CHAPTER IX.

THOUGH it deserves to be recorded in natural, or any other history, that poor Cocotte, under the tuition of her new master, had acquired a polyglot jargon unequalled since the confusion of Babel,—compounded of all the tongues of ancient and modern Europe, with a little touch of Sanscrit and Chinese, to the utter oblivion of her original cry of “Marcus, Marcus,”—let us not be a moment supposed to have become equally forgetful.

To follow, step by step, the voyages or travels of a man of his temper, spurred into frantic activity by recent rejection, would have been as pleasant a fate as being tied to the tail of

a kite, or stick of a rocket;—and very much to be pitied was an invalid gentleman on his way to Alexandria, whose state cabin squared with that of Captain Davenport. Snatches of songs,—soliloquies compounded of Coal-Hole and Béranger,—Corneille and Shakspeare,—oaths on the smallest possible scale, succeeding to rhapsodies to which those of Nat Lee would sound tame and prosaic, were distinctly audible from his berth, nearly three-and-twenty hours of the twenty-four. The Bay of Biscay, which was in a state of calm when the steamer cut through its blue waters, was probably overawed by the storm raging in the breast of the Honourable Marcus.

But these moral typhoons are seldom of long duration.—His anger soon raved itself to rest. Before they neared Gibraltar, he had brought himself to own that, after all, Mary might be right; that their natures *were* dissimilar; and that with a wife possessed of such decided opinions and a will so much her own, he should probably have been a miserable man.

Valueing and loving her, however, as much as ever, he solaced himself with the hope that the commission undertaken by Drewe would place her in some degree in the position she had scorned to accept as his wife; and by the time they reached Malta, calmer and still calmer reflection had convinced him that her fine sterling character and the gentle confidingness of his brother, were eminently calculated to create a model *ménage*.

Such was the origin of the letter which, after some irresolution and compunction, he addressed to Lord Davenport: admiring himself all the time, as being as fine an example of magnanimity as Quintus Curtius.—After sealing and despatching it, he swallowed a tremendous glass of cognac and soda-water, the nepenthe of modern heroes; and straightway paraded on deck, and whistled “Love not” in divers keys and with many variations, till several squeamish passengers devoutly wished him overboard.

(To Parents and Guardians.—*Nota bene*.)

That a long journey of any kind is a sovereign remedy for unhappy love ; a sea voyage, an unfailing specific :—and that the Oriental and Peninsular Mail Company have first-class vessels chartered to sail every week, which are especially recommended for the purpose.)

When Captain Davenport, his gun-cases and colour-boxes, reached Corfu, where his old regiment was quartered to recruit after severe service in the East, he had brought' himself tolerably on a par with his fellow Christians ;—and pleasant enough it was to find himself once more among his old brothers in arms, released from military thralldom, wealthy and independent ; rich, above all, in a capital Purdey and rifle, two couple of well-broke spaniels, within reach of the finest woodcock-shooting in the world. With such pleasures and pastimes in store, no chance at present of his taking a header from the Leucadian promontory.

Engrossed in field-sports, or interrupting

them only when the pursuit of game led him into mountain-passes or sequestered valleys appealing irresistibly to the exercise of the pencil, Marcus spent many weeks in Albania; endeavouring to forget there was a London on the surface of the globe, and earnestly wishing that the free and independent electors of Rawburne might be induced to forget *him*; or that, as he had never taken his seat, his return to Parliament might be cancelled.—But the constant expectation of a peremptory recall served only to add zest to his travels; and the Isles of Greece “where burning Sappho” and icy Byron “loved and sung” were successively visited; their fairer features sketched, their coverts thoroughly beaten.—When he returned to Corfu,—himself and his spaniels very little the worse for wear,—Mark Davenport was nearly the same gay manly fellow, who had fought like a hero in the Punjaub.

While waiting to take a passage in the first steamer bound for Constantinople—enduring



with as little patience as might be, during the Easter festivities, the noise of the petards whizzed in honour of St. Spiridion,—he chanced to dine at the Government House, to meet a former brother officer of some distinction, that morning arrived from England; who was of course beset by all present for London news,—the last gossip of the Clubs,—the anticipated chit-chat of the newspapers.—For the tediousness of colonial exile does not fail to stimulate that wondrous appetite for tidings of marriages between titled persons with whom we have no acquaintance, and deaths of titled people in whom we have no concern, which characterises the Great British Gôbe-mouche.

Major Harland had been questioned and cross-questioned till his mind grew a little confused, and his fashionable intelligence somewhat turbid; so that he appeared hardly certain whether it were Mario who lived in fear of the stiletto from Rachel, or Grisi in fear of the knout from the Emperor Nicholas, or *vice versa*.

He was immediately attacked, by a facetious aide-de-camp, with inquiries whether Lord Brougham had not been consecrated Bishop of Cannes, and S. G. O. or D. C. L., Archbishop of Nomansland;—and by way of silencing this impertinent waggery, he began to recount the sudden distinctions of two rising politicians,—Lord Davenport in the Upper, William Eustace in the Lower House.

“By the way, my dear Mark,” added he, turning to Captain Davenport, “I was beset, on leaving London, with urgent messages for you. Don’t look so frightened; they were neither from your tailor, nor your tobacconist, nor Tattersall’s.—Your brother, of whom I have been giving news to which you turn a deaf ear, threatens to marry and cut you out with a whole grove of olive-branches, if you do not instantly return to your Ps and Qs at Westminster.”

“It was scarcely like Davenport, my dear Harland, to load you with *vivâ voce* lectures which he has delivered much more con-

cisely by this morning's mail," replied Marcus, drily.

"Well, then,—since you repudiate fraternal authority, tell me if you dare, that I was not assailed with a thousand inquiries concerning yourself and your prospects in life, by a fair widow, an old Indian flame of yours and mine, with whom I renewed my acquaintance the other day."

"The lady seems to have chosen her confidant discreetly," said Marcus, with some bitterness. "But however lightly you may treat *her* secrets, Harland, I will thank you to show more respect for mine."

At that moment, the courses were luckily changing, and the conversation was impeded; much to the relief of several persons present who were aware of the gunpowder texture of Mark Davenport's temperament.—When coffee was served after dinner, Major Harland seized the opportunity of taking the angry man apart, not to "demand an explanation," but to afford

one, pleasantly and gratuitously, of all he had advanced.

“*Faut pas m'en vouloir*, my dear Mark,” said he, “because Mrs. Burton has a better memory than your own.—’Tis not *my* fault that you go about the world, breaking hearts, and leaving other people to pick up the bits.”

“You were in Gloucestershire, then, before you left England?” inquired Davenport, coldly. “Mrs. Burton has for some years past resided with her father, near Cardington.”

“Near fiddlestick! I don’t believe you have inquired, these hundred years past, what has become of your once idolised Rachel,” replied Harland, under the inspiration of a glass of Maraschino brewed, in the “Isles of Grece” as potent as their Sapphics.

“In that case, by informing me what has become of her, you will assist a cause to which few people of my acquaintance have less conduced—the diffusion of useful knowledge,”—retorted Davenport, for he hated to have a

hand profane laid on the ark of his domestic interests.

“ Well then,—know that she was my fellow passenger from Gibraltar to Malta.”

“ To Malta?—You must be dreaming ! What on earth could take Mrs. Burton to Malta ? On the eve of leaving town, I was summoned by her lawyer to make an affidavit of Sylvester Burton’s death, of which I was an eye-witness ; to assist some law-plea she was about to institute in behalf of her poor little girl.”

“ She gained it ; and the child is a ward in Chancery, and an heiress.—A few years hence, we shall see in the papers some spendthrift lord referred to the Master in charge of her wealth, to have a proper settlement made upon the minor.”

“ I doubt it. Little Sophy will survive neither to woman’s estate nor to her grandfather’s.—Those Anglo-Indian children,—poor shivering little atoms,—never prosper.”

“ Yet one has heard tell of one Thackeray,



and one Roebuck; and last, and very far from least, what say you to poor Charles Buller?"

"Well, if you will have it so, may Burton's little girl grow up to write Pendennis, or become Judge Advocate!—"

"I wish you would be serious; for I assure you the case is far from mirthful.—When Mrs. Burton and her little daughter were put on shore at Malta, our doctor heaved a sigh of relief. He had been afraid of a gale, or change of weather, he said:—when the life of the child would not have been worth four-and-twenty hours' purchase."

"You had a fortunate escape. A funeral at sea is a depressing operation," replied Marcus, —doing his utmost to conceal the deep interest he took in Harland's intelligence.

"Don't be a brute!" cried the latter, provoked by his pretended indifference.—"Had you been on the spot, you would have been as deeply touched as I was by that poor woman's heart-clinging to her declining child. —I am no more of a muff than yourself, Mark. But

by Jove, I could hardly bear to see her on deck, hanging over the mattress where the poor little creature was daily laid for the benefit of the Mediterranean breezes.—It struck me as an all but providential coincidence that I, who, like yourself, had so often carried little Sophy an infant in arms, by way of paying court to her pretty young mother, in a remote country so many thousand miles distant, should be on the spot to see the poor little thing resign the life for which she has ever since been struggling.”

“A hard fate, Mrs. Burton’s!” murmured Davenport with emotion no longer to be disguised.—“Exile and a vile husband,—exile and a dying child!—Ten weary years between, to complete the cycle of her sorrows!”

“Are you acquainted with any one at Malta?” inquired Harland, glad to have succeeded in reaching at last his vein of sensibility.—“It would be a great mercy to write and recommend her to the kindness of some lady of your acquaintance. She has no friend with her,—

nothing but servants.—Had I not been overdue at Head-Quarters, I could not have resisted my inclination to land with her, and see her comfortably established, before I joined the regiment.—You remember how quiet, and ladylike, and gentle, we always thought her. She is now twice as attractive. Country life in England, and the society of her own sex, have rendered her one of the most pleasing little women in the world.”

Major Harland, a renowned chess player, was at that moment summoned by the facetious aide-de-camp for the honour of a game with his *Chef*; and Marcus was left to make up his mind whether Constantinople or Malta afforded the most direct course to the discharge of his parliamentary duties.—Setting geography at defiance (secure from the criticisms of the Drewes, Senior and Junior) he made it a question of time or place.—If time were to decide it, the odds lay in favour of his reaching England sooner *viâ* the Dardanelles, than by taking Valetta in his way.

But as nothing had transpired in public of the tidings communicated by Major Harland, when it appeared that his name was included among the first-class passengers of the next homeward-bound mail-steamer, it was settled among his Corfuote friends, that he had been suddenly summoned to London by a call of the House.—It was only the captain who could have apprised them that the passage of the unstable Marcus was taken only as far as “the little military hot-house.”

Among the tokens of change and progress remarkable in these our times, when, as an able American writer has expressed it, “steam and electricity concentrate the significance of every passing hour,” is the seeming ubiquity of people travelways addicted ; and the probability of stumbling on an acquaintance in any possible public conveyance,—whether on the Ganges or the Mississippi,—across the Pampas or the Punjaub.

The first person who hailed Captain Davenport from the paddle-box of the Stromboli, was

a singular individual attired "in a Scotch," as Chateaubriand translates "*En Ecossais*;" in a tartan shooting-jacket, waistcoat, and trowsers, and a Highland cap, the incongruities of which would have made Glasgow hide its head under its plaidie.—Davenport was thoroughly puzzled; till, leaping on deck, the stranger all but embraced him while announcing himself as "*Grugemonde. Vous savez bien, mon cher? Le Vicomte de Grugemonde.*"

"You must easily recal to yourself, my dear friend," added he, fearing that, *ce bon Davenport* might have forgotten his French, "our charming country dinner at Richmond with our friend Le Drew, and a swarthy man of letters which his name I forget, who was made me eat cold butter with my *limandes*, what you call them, Thames flounders."

The memory of Marcus was no longer at fault; and he was soon ready to lend his ear and his sympathies to the mischances undergone since they parted, by the little be-Scoticised *Vicomte*. Small as he was, he had been frac-



tured by the reverberation of the *coup-d'état* ; and was now one of many thousand exiles, more or less illustrious.—Like nearly every Frenchman with tolerable abilities or education, he had been dabbling in press intrigues ; and seemed as surprised as indignant, that even an elective monarchy does not choose to be conspired against, without returning the enemy's fire.

He was now, he said, like Marius at Carthage, or his friends Dumas and Hugo wherever they might be, “eating the bitter bread of banishment.”—His only consolation was that the present state of things could not last, (when did a banished *intrigant* ever say otherwise ?) and the restoration to power and influence of himself and his friends, would once more restore in France the balance of power, and the pacification of Europe.

“ *D'ailleurs pensons !*” said he, in the words of his brother exile, Victor Hugo.—

“ Nos jours sont des jours d'amertume,

Mais quand nous étendons les bras dans notre brume

Nous sentons une main ;

Quand nous marchons, courbés, dans l'ombre du martyre,  
Nous entendons quelqu'un derrière nous, nous dire  
C'est ici le chemin!"

Mark Davenport laughed,—but only in the sleeve of his pilot coat, at the fluttering of the fly on the wheel: strongly of opinion that poor Grugemonde had better extend his attempts at National Reform, to eating cold butter with flounders.—But it served to beguile the tediousness of the voyage far better than the sight of flying fish and dying dolphins with which his Mediterranean experiences rendered him over familiar, to listen to the marvellous histories related by this diamond edition of a conspirator, as only a Frenchman knows how to monster his nothings; with his far-extended right hand inverted and closed, save the second finger serving as an index to his eloquence; after the form of the coral charms against the evil eye, worn by the fishermen of Naples.

The Vicomte de Grugemonde evidently considered his quality of "*proscrit*," to be, like his miraculous tartans, "*très-bien porté*:" and

fancied that he had achieved a position for life, as a victim of the *coup-d'état*. It was a surprise as well as a deep mortification to him to learn from Mark that he had no chance of becoming, as he evidently expected, a great lion under the pilotage of "*ce cher Le Drewe*" throughout the remnant of the London season ; and that the exiled-patriot market had been so long overstocked, that, let a Lucius Junius Brutus make his appearance, with his estates ever so confiscated, or his papers ever so burned by the public executioner, he would have little chance of picking up a decent livelihood nearer the centre of civilisation than New York. So long as we deposit our own rebels at Spike Island, it would be absurd indeed to offer a premium to foreign disaffection.

The little Vicomte, though somewhat crest-fallen, still seemed to trust in the charm of his "*position affreuse* ;" and Marcus found that he was undertaking a volume of autobiographical memoirs, likely in all probability to consign to durance vile a score or two of his Parisian con-

federates ;—as the frontispiece to which, himself and his tartans, sketched by a far more illustrious exile, Gavarni, were to figure as a sample of the last invented Coriolanus of the Boulevard des Capucins.

As they approached Malta, however, Captain Davenport gave less attention to the mock heroics of his companion than to the uneasy suggestions of his own mind.—Like the gallant Earl of Peterborough,

He said to his heart, betwixt sleeping and waking,  
“Thou wild thing that always art leaping on aching,

what is to become of us both, if little Sophy Burton’s despairing mother should treat us with the contumely we have so richly deserved?”

It required some courage, and that courage he found in his consciousness of superiority to all mercenary motives, to approach Mrs. Burton at all.—For he had left her, poor, and was seeking her, wealthy. But he knew that it was his own want of fortune, not hers, which had rendered it impossible for him to offer her his

hand; and would not believe that *his* motives could be misinterpreted.

It was evening when he landed; and so much had the mercury in his veins been depressed by misgivings, that he did not bestow more than half an oath, in *lingua franca* or any other lingo, upon the noisy touters besetting him on the quay.

There was little difficulty in ascertaining at the Consular Office the residence of a person so newly landed as Mrs. Burton. She had been fortunate in securing a small but lovely villa, half a mile from the city, called the Marina Sant 'Uberto. But let no future sojourner in the Island of Saintly Knighthood extinct, and oval oranges still flourishing, attempt to discover the spot, (if indeed there exist a man capable of attempting to realise the localities of modern romance, save that genial enthusiast, Lord S——;) for the fortifications, completed last year by a barbarous Governor, destroyed the last vestige of this terrestrial Paradise!—



## CHAPTER X.

LESS philosophic in his generation than Athenian Socrates, Hargood did not seem to appreciate the delightful titillation of the epidermis ensuing the removal of manacles, declared by that eminent sage to be a sufficient indemnification for previous bondage.—He rather resembled those modern martyrs, who, having worn all day a coat too tight in the arm-holes, keep hitching and grumbling on, even after the offending garment has given place to a wadded wrapper.

He was not quite satisfied to find that his place had been readily filled up; and that his value in the literary market was only that of

one of the mechanical portions of a mighty engine ;—one of the fourteen thousand mirrors contained in the eye of a bluebottle. Misled by the overweening “*We*” he had been so long permitted to emblazon on a scutcheon of pretence, he had calculated the square of his pedestal on too vast a basis ; and dreamed not that there may exist as much disparity between “*WE*” and “*WE*,” as between the thunder of Olympian Jove and a Cremorne cracker.

“I am rejoiced, dear Hugh, to find you have got a good berth for Hargood,” wrote Marcus in reply to his brother’s first communication, purporting to prepare the way for the announcement of his marriage ;—“for he is an able scholar, and an upright and honourable man. But now you have extricated him from the Blindman’s buff of his critical calling, and removed the bandage from his eyes,—extend your kindness further, and let him see something of living authors and politicians.—Dizzy, in his Vivian Greyhood, used to say he hated the society of literary people,—they were so

very illiterate. Nothing struck me more in Hargood than his utter ignorance of the literary tastes and tendencies of the age.—Professional critics see nothing in a book, but the passages to be extracted.—The soul of its goodness is as invisible to them as, to eyes profane, the spirits revealed to the *Seherinn von Prevorst*.—I should really like the old fellow to hear a little strong straightforward talk about books, and men, and measures; concerning which he has been mincing his way in letter-press for the last five-and-twenty years, like Queen Emma charily creeping among the burning ploughshares.—Let him have a glimmer of Macaulay, Austin, Fonblanque,—Bulwer and Smythe, Dickens and Milnes, and he will come down from his stilts.—Don't let him fancy himself too great an officer; or that

Sit Cato, dum vivet, sanè vel Cæsare major.”

Lord Davenport knew better than to follow such advice. He would as soon have offered to a pastrycook's apprentice a banquet of cheese-

cakes, followed by a digestive pill.—He had already perceived that Hargood was becoming as anxious as the worldly-minded but, (in spite of Thackeray) most witty Congreve, to emancipate himself fully and completely from what is called the livery of the Muses.—Perhaps he thought this a becoming tribute to the dignity of his future son-in-law ! More likely, he was vexed at finding his very name unknown among the conscript fathers of the republic of Letters, to whom he was now, for the first time, presented.

One of the questions chiefly agitated between the families in Pulteney Street and Spring Gardens, was the time and place to be selected for the wedding. The anniversary of the late Lord Davenport's death was overpast ; the achievement, with its ghastly emblems of mortality, removed from the front of the house ; the family liveries were restored to their wonted colours ; so that there was no impediment to Olivia's appearing as bridesmaid to the sister-in-law she was prepared to love so dearly.

But the other?—Mary could not bear the thought of renouncing the presence of her darling Amy. It was however impossible for Lady Meadows to quit Radensford Rectory, at the very moment the worst tidings were expected from the Mediterranean. — Even a proposal that Amy should quit her mother for a day or two, and become a guest in Spring Gardens for the marriage solemnity, met with a decided refusal.—“It would be unpardonable if, at such a crisis, she were to desert her mother and their venerable friend.”

That she felt it far more impossible to meet William Eustace at the altar under the circumstances of the case, Miss Meadows did not think it necessary to expound. But, knowing from Lady Davenport that he was to officiate as bridesman to her son, and nothing doubting that his betrothal to her cousin Olivia would, on this solemn family gathering be decided, she felt unequal to the occasion.—If the Hargoods thought themselves fortunate that Marcus, accidentally detained at Malta, would



spare them the embarrassment of his presence, Amy congratulated herself quite as much that she had so good a pretext for remaining quietly in the country.

She heard daily from Olivia how everything was going on ;—how speedily dear Mary had endeared herself to all their hearts ; how Mr. Hargood was constantly at his new office ; and how the family diamonds had been reset, and presented to one who, having gratified her future mother-in-law by placing them round her slender throat and graceful brow, looked, thus suitably adorned, more queenly than a queen.

It was much that, under all these details, Amy grew neither envious nor jealous.—Would it could be added that she was not growing miserably unhappy.

One evening, at the close of June, Lord Davenport having persuaded his mother to allow Olivia, escorted by her ex-governess, to chaperon his bride elect, to the Opera, an inostensible box was secured ; and, at an early hour, they

were prepared to enjoy a representation of the divine *Favorita* of Donizetti. It was to be one of Grisi's last appearances in the part; and Mary had never seen either the actress or the piece;—never in short, save on one occasion as a child, been present at an opera.—The fear that she might altogether lose the delight to be derived from Grisi's now precarious voice, if the attempt were postponed, had prompted Lord Davenport to overcome the scruples of his mother.

Perhaps he would have urged his request less eagerly in behalf of his beloved Mary, had he been prepared for the sensation caused by her first appearance in public.—Though her dress was of the very simplest kind, and though she remained by choice completely in the background, yet a glimpse obtained of her in the lobby on her way to the box, by a knot of Cruxleyans, lounging near their omnibus, sufficed to attract all eyes towards the “beautiful Nobody, whom Davenport was about to marry.”—Once seen, she was not likely to be again overlooked.

Among the fashionable critics, some discovered in the new beauty the blended features of the Undying One and a lovely Irish Marchioness, in the best days of both. Others, the classical head of the Amber Witch, enhanced by the grace of Virginia, Lady S.—The artists present compared her countenance to the magical panel-picture by Van Holst at Lansdowne House.—But all agreed that, save in the Clytia of the National Museum, so perfect a model of female beauty had never demanded perpetuation from sculpture.

“Vexatious enough to have to ‘own that great reformer Davenport to be in the right,” observed one of the Cruxleyans. “I hoped he had found a mare’s nest; and it turns out to be that of a Phoenix!”

“But one must get an Act of Parliament passed to prevent his immuring this superb creature. It would be a national calamity!” observed Lord Curt, without withdrawing his glasses from the Davenport box.—“She looks

as if she had stepped from a canvas by Van Dyck."

"But Van Dyck has been dead a good many years, hasn't he, uncle?" demanded the innocent Captain Halliday.

"A couple of ages, or so. But that is nothing now-a-days. He paints still, through a medium, in Hades, whenever he gets a good order."

"But I thought the famous medium's name was Haden, not Hades?"—

"Don't begin to *think*, my good fellow, or you won't be worth half the money. The difference lies between an S. and N.;—an asinine objection.—But who has spoken to Davenport to-night?—Is he affable?—Is he likely to present one to his bride?"—

"See! he is at this moment presenting Eustace!"

"Eustace is one of the family. He is about to become the pastor and master of yonder little pet-lamb, with a blue ribbon round its neck."

“I hope not. Two such paragons in one family as Eustace and Davenport, would be turbot upon turtle,” said Lord Curt.—“One should see them going down to posterity hand in hand, in marble, and on canvas; or bound in calf for the use of schools,—like Damon and Pythias,—Harmodius and Aristogiton,—or Sternhold and Hopkins!—No, no!—I mean the little pet-lamb to marry my nephew Haliday here. *She* would supply the Simple in their *ménage*, and he, the *ton*.”

“Let the boy alone, Curt,” cried his favourite scholar. “You always drive him out of the box.”

“For the credit of the family taste, I trust he is gone to the stalls, to obtain a nearer view of the future Lady Davenport. I would do as much myself, if diffidence and the gout did not stand in my way.”

“Look at her now. By Jove! the *Diane chasseresse* of the Louvre is not fit to hold a lucifer-match to her!”—cried his *double*, directing his glasses full upon Mary; who,



touched to the heart by the exquisite fourth act of the *Favorita*, out of all consciousness of the public stare, was leaning forward to listen, in the ecstasy peculiar to those of whom music is the natural language.

Eustace, who was still lingering in the box, surveyed her with wonder ;—Davenport, with adoration ;—the former secretly congratulating himself that the lady of *his* thoughts had a little less of the Muse in her nature and bearing.

“ I should always fancy I saw the making of a Clytemnestra,” thought he, “ in that terribly Grecian line of features.—I can’t fancy her and that meek fellow, Davenport, united in holy matrimony. They will be like the mismatched halves of two five-pound-notes, rendered blank by the junction.”

“ I am a little disappointed in your friend,” was on the other hand the verdict of Mary, the following day, after the admirable performance of the night before had been feelingly discussed between them.—“ I said nothing about him

last night, as dear little Livy was present.—  
But he really seems to me a dull reserved  
young man. His air of being *désabusé du*  
*monde* is so out of keeping with his age and  
prospects.”

“Show more mercy to a man in love!—  
Eustace is far from happy.”

“Not happy in company with his *fiancée*,  
and *choyée* by her whole family?”

*Witty dialogue  
bet. Hugh & Mary* “Be pleased, my little wife that is to be, to  
talk English, and talk sense.—Surely, dearest,  
*you* are not one of those who fancy that Wil-  
liam Eustace is to be my brother-in-law?—  
My father and his used to talk the matter over,  
when there was an occasional armistice in their  
warfare concerning long and short-horned cattle.  
But this was the very thing to prevent it.—  
Besides, I hope my mother will enjoy for some  
years to come, the comfort of Olivia’s society.  
She is too young to marry.”

“I grant you. But in that case, by whom  
is he rendered unhappy?”

“Aha! — Have I worked upon your

curiosity, at last, and forced you into a question you ought to have asked long ago?"

"Perhaps I was too proud,—or too lazy."

"Neither. You fell into one of those mistakes which produce half the evils in the world,—you took things for granted.—Everybody says that Eustace is to marry my sister; and as there is no smoke without fire,—and as *l' universale non s' inganna*,—Olivia is of course to be Mrs. Eustace!"

"I plead guilty. I believed it all. And therefore forbore to question you concerning what, you did not communicate, unquestioned."

"Well then, question me now; and I will fairly own that Eustace never evinced the smallest inclination to become my brother;—nay that, highly as I value him, it would have annoyed me if he had.—I should scarcely have liked poor little Livy to become daughter-in-law to Lady Louisa: a formal, cold-hearted woman, alive only to the opinion of the world; who has lived all her life in trammels of her own de-

vising, which have imparted to her nature the same constrained uneasy uprightness that irons, worn in youth, impart to the human shape."

"But Olivia would have married the *son*, not the *mother*?"

"I am afraid I entertain rather foreign notions concerning the influence a mother is intitled to exercise over the wife of her son. To me a *belle mère* is—"

"Be pleased, my tall husband that is to be, to talk English and talk sense; and without further circumlocution, to give up the maiden name of my future friend, Mrs. William Eustace."

"I did not tell you that he was going to be married.—I told you he was deeply in love."

"If not with Olivia, then, it is with Madame Winkleried; for he is never out of your house."

"If you have not guessed nearer the mark, you are very stupid. If you have, you are a little hypocrite, to force me to tell you what you know as well as I do—"

“ Well, then,—I *am* a little hypocrite. Only speak out !”

“ As if you were not perfectly aware that, from the period of that miserable fever at Radensford, which nearly cost Eustace his life, and *did* cost my poor uncle’s, he has been devotedly attached to Amy Meadows—”

“ I know that he formerly admired her.—But I also know that, from that time to this, there has been no communication between them.—Traitor ! why have you kept me so long in the dark !”

“ Because Eustace imposed discretion on me.—He begged me to leave you to your surmises ; convinced that, between two girls, two cousins, there must exist sufficient *esprit de corps* to—”

“ English, if your lordship pleases—”

“ Enough female confederacy, then, to induce you to apprise poor Amy of the steadfastness of his attachment—”

“ And if I did ?—”

“ If you did, prematurely, you would ex-



pose him to the probability of a second rejection."

"He *did* propose to her, then?" inquired Mary, from whom the delicacy of her cousin towards Eustace had hitherto reserved the fact.

"He did,—and most inopportunistically: while still in deep affliction for her father's death, and sharing perhaps the general opinion that Eustace had been the means of introducing into the neighbourhood the fatal infection."

"But had she entertained any real affection for him, that untoward circumstance,—Lady Louisa's fault rather than his,—would not have induced her to refuse him—"

"She entertained *no* affection for him,—or for anybody. She was too young. She was a spoiled child. She did not know what she wanted."

"But why should she know better now?"

"By *wanting* it.—Amy has discovered that the world is not at her feet. Of the few men she has known, I and Marcus, for in-

stane, never dreamed of falling in love with her. And she has consequently discovered, or will discover in time, that to have secured the permanent affections of a man of first-rate principles and intellect,—well-looking, well-born, well-mannered,—is a blessing not to be trifled with.”

“And so, all this has been a foul conspiracy betwixt you and your friend, against my poor little helpless cousin !”

“With the best intentions towards her, on my part. I dearly love Amy. She is the prettiest, blithest little bird in the world ; and will make the sweetest of wives and mothers. —But she wanted bringing to reason ; and to reason, I trust, she has been brought. From the first, I was aware of Eustace’s continued preference, and intention to renew his suit if he saw an opening with any prospect of success ; and having, during her sojourn at Radensford, constantly seen her letters to Livy and to yourself,—”

“Again I say, traitor !—How was I to sup-

pose that in asking to see them, and obtaining an insight into all her little frank ingenuous avowals,—you were gathering up mischiefs to be conveyed to your friend !”

“As yet I have not told him a word. I leave him to make his own discoveries.”

“Then why so anxious yourself to ascertain the state of her mind ?”

“Because, having the greatest regard for Eustace, I was eager to satisfy myself of his prospects of happiness. Had I only breathed to him all I saw, and heard, and deeply enjoyed seeing and hearing, the other day when I visited Radensford in search of your father, I should have been having him start off the following day ; perhaps startling her again to take refuge on her pedestal of maidenly pride ; or,—if Amy understood her own happiness sufficiently to accept him at once, and be thankful,—lose him for the remainder of the session, when he is of the utmost use and value to us here !”

“A party job, after all !—I wish you knew

how thoroughly I am ashamed of you !”—said Mary, with assumed indignation.—“I have a mind to write this very moment to my cousin and encourage her to play the Beatrice to the last moment, with this impertinent Benedict.”

“Just the *esprit*—”

“Hush !—English, and common sense !”

“In the plainest English, then, and plainest common sense, if you are bent upon acquainting Amy that there is a miserable man burning to throw himself and a handsome fortune at her feet, you may enclose her a letter which I have this morning undertaken to forward to her, through my aunt—”

“From Mr. Eustace ?”

“From Hamilton Drewe ; who, from poet that he was, has been struck unspeakably prosy, by the sight of two fair cousins whom he seems to have surprised, in a family group, in this very room.”

“I well remember his breaking in upon us.”

“At first, his sensitive heart inclined towards

the darker beauty.—But, finding her devotedly attached to myself,—I beg your pardon,—of course I mean finding me devotedly attached to *her*,—he thought it better to alter the epithets in the Sonnet addressed ‘To ——,’ beginning: ‘O angel bright!’ or words to that effect. And ever since old Wroughton Drewe’s fortune, added to his own, has enabled him to offer to Miss Meadows what he considers a suitable position, (and for a poet, he has wonderfully material notions about town and country houses, pin-money, jointure, and so forth,) he has been wild to throw himself at her feet. Poor Drewe has been running about with his letter in search of me,—from Spring Gardens hither,—from hence to Lincoln’s Inn,—from Lincoln’s Inn to the House of Lords,—like a dramatic author after a manager, with his MS. sticking out of his pocket,—till the poor letter is literally worn at the edges.—*Ecce signum!*” said Lord Davenport, drawing from his pocket-book an epistle as limp and shapeless as though it had arrived per mail from Rio Janeiro.



“And am I to forward to Amy this unsightly article?”

“Certainly.—But if you despise its form and pressure, what would you say to its contents!”

“You have not surely read it?”

“I have had it, alas! read to *me*. When he caught me at length, Drewe did not spare me, I promise you.—But that I know he had previously recited it to half-a-dozen members of his club, I should fancy myself especially favoured; and that, under my unfortunate circumstances as an engaged man, Drewe might suppose me in want of a model for the letters I address you.”

“But you address me none. Less fortunate than Amy, *I* must submit to be bored through the ear, rather than the eye:—by far the less evitable evil.”

“To punish your sauciness, dear darling Mary, I am half inclined to favour you with such an epistle as Drewe’s: containing Selections from popular poets—English, French, German,

Italian—besides his own most poetical prose:—just such a farrago in short as his speeches on the hustings.—Is it not strange that a good-hearted fellow like Drewe cannot be one moment natural?”

“*Natural?*”—I never saw a man who better merited the name!—But it is really a pity to send such a letter to Amy, who will only laugh at the writer.”

“The best thing that can happen to him.—All Hamilton Drewe requires is to be laughed out of his absurdities; even as all that Amy wanted was a little uncertainty touching her power over the heart with which she has trifled.”

“After all, I am afraid I have pledged my fate to a Pombal, an Alberoni, a Richelieu, a Sir Robert Walpole, instead of the honest man I fancied you!—I am half inclined to give back this ring, dear Hugh, and demand in exchange my lock of hair!”

“Better not.—You will be asking for it back again before the day is over!—Well, well!—I ask pardon on my bended knees.—People

' so happy as I am, are apt to get saucy. If I dared address you in French, I should say, *que j'ai le bonheur insolent*. And now, let us look for a large envelope, and enclose to "Miss Meadowes, Radensford Rectory, Gloucestershire," an amount of British and other classics that will cost you at least three blue postage stamps for conveyance!—"

## CHAPTER XI.

AT his last visit to Valetta, in early spring time, Marcus had endured cheerfully, in favour of his artistic gratifications, both sun and sirocco, and all the noise and formalities of a fortified city. The lightness and cheeriness of the scene,—the pearl-like whiteness of the city, embedded in its sapphire sea,—the striped awnings, — the rose-coloured oleanders, — the fragrant orange blossom,—had charmed him on his return from central India ;—equally sultry, but unrefreshed by vicinity to the sea.

Now, at Midsummer, all looked unpropitious : the white walls discoloured and degraded,—the heat intolerable,—the population a heterogeneous

compound of the orts and ends of Europe.—  
He was out of sorts. He was out of temper :  
and, like Byron on the same spot,

Could only stare from out his casement,  
And ask for what is such a place meant.

On presenting himself at the Marina Sant, Uberto, he had been refused admittance. He could not take it for a personal rebuff; for to the respectable middle-aged English man-servant who opened the gate, no name had been announced.—But he had reason to infer, from the man's dejected manner as well as from his answers, that "Miss Burton had derived no benefit from change of climate."—The "baby" progressed into "Miss Burton!"—Poor Marcus! What a reminder of the progress of time.

That evening was dreary, indeed. Though Captain Davenport had many friends in the garrison, he remained moping at the hotel; and even for his saunter on the ramparts, selected the mess hour, when he knew he should be secure from all military encounter.



What was to be done?—Should he write? Should he renew his call?—To have come there, for the sole purpose of watching over one apparently in need of protection, and keep aloof, conscience-stricken and ashamed, was a weakness foreign to his nature. On the spur of the moment, he set off a second time to the villa. Though an undue hour for visiting, it was the most enjoyable portion of those grilling summer days fit only for cicadas and lizards; and *this* time, he prepared himself beforehand with a few lines signed with his name; stating that an old friend was desirous of inquiring after the little girl, and offering his services to her mother.

He had chosen his time auspiciously; for Mrs. Burton, who was as usual, watching beside the cane couch, drawn towards the windows for the benefit of the cooling evening breeze, where lay her little suffering charge, on finding that an answer was waited for, opened and perused the letter.—An exclamation of “Marcus Davenport!” — “Captain Davenport!” when

she reached the signature, was not to be repressed.

She was about instantly to despatch by the servant a message of ceremonious thanks. But the name had caught the ear of her little companion. It was one associated with her earliest impression;—with dusky faces,—swift borne palanquins,—and the delicious fruits and flowers of a tropical country. No toys had ever half so much amused her, as those presented to her by Marcus. She had a vague recollection of being carried in his arms, in a city of domes and minarets; and returning home, laden with these varnished delights.

With the eagerness of sickness, little Sophy entreated that “Marcus” might not be sent away. She wanted to see him again.

Mrs. Burton demurred. It was the last thing on earth she could have wished.—But how to deny *any* request to the child whose days,—whose very hours,—were numbered! —There was nothing under the face of Heaven that Sophy could have asked for,

which her mother would not have made some wild attempt to procure.

In compliance with her little daughter's twice-repeated request, therefore, she desired that Captain Davenport might be admitted; and a few minutes afterwards, she felt, rather than saw, that he was approaching her through the twilight.

A very few low and incoherent words were exchanged between them. For Rachel's voice was broken by suppressed tears; tears in which Marcus Davenport had no more share than the bat that was flitting to and fro before the verandah-shaded windows. She was thinking only of the child;—the tender-hearted child whom time nor absence had estranged from her earliest friend; the child whose loving heart would so soon cease to beat.

Even Marcus seemed to be thoroughly occupied by Sophy. The little thin hand,—scarcely human in its slenderness,—which she extended towards him the moment he approached her, was silently raised to his lips.

A rougher movement seemed unfitted to its unearthly texture.

“Do you remember me?” asked her faint little voice, as he bent towards her for the purpose. “And have you still got poor Cocotte? I have often, often thought of you both.—Why did you never come and see us, at grandpapa’s?—I asked mamma.—But she said you were not in England.”

“I was very long absent.”

“And when you came back, you had perhaps forgotten us?”

Another kiss bestowed upon the little feeble hand which he still held, was his reply. And little Sophy, feeling when he relinquished it, that it was wet with tears, perceived with the double tact of childhood and of disease, that there must be no further allusion to the past.

It was dusk almost to darkness; so that neither could distinguish the countenance of the other;—and under favour of this concealment, Marcus cleared his voice and endeavoured

to talk cheerfully of his voyage and of home.

“I can give you news of my Cousin Amy,” said he; “who, I find, is occupying your post at Radensford Rectory during your absence.”

“I heard this morning from home,” replied Mrs. Burton, in a tone of deep dejection. “There, thank Heaven, all is well. Lady Meadowes more than supplies my place with my dear old father; and Amy is his constant companion.”

“And a cheerful and charming one,” added Captain Davenport, “the kindest-hearted creature breathing. Amy and I often talked together of you, in England,” he added in a low voice to Mrs. Burton; but not so low as to escape the vigilant ear of the sick child.

“And is Amy Meadowes then your relation?” said she, addressing Marcus.—“How strange, that she should never have told me so.—But I ought to have guessed it. Dear, good



Amy!—She used to bring me fruit and flowers from Meadows Court, just as you, Captain Davenport, used to give them to me in India.—I think you are just alike,—alike, that is, in kindness—”

This was so much for the poor little creature to say and feel, that her mother trembled lest she should be tiring herself.

“ You must not encourage her to talk,—you must not allow her to excite herself,” whispered she, to Mark. “ The slightest exertion, the doctors say, is too much.”

“ Don’t believe them, mamma, don’t believe them, Marcus,” said the child,—though gasping for breath.—“ The only thing that makes me worse is to be among strange faces,—always, *always*, among strange faces. And I feel much better this evening, only for seeing *you*, Marcus. Do you remember the little gold heart you gave me on my birthday, when I was two years old? —I have got it still, in my desk at home. Among the few presents that were ever made me, I always loved it best, because it was the

first.—Do you think mother—*do you*—do you think I shall ever go back and open that poor old desk again?”—

Was it wonderful that with such appeals sounding in her ears, Rachel Burton should be as indifferent to the presence of Captain Davenport, as to the chair he sat on! All his value in her eyes at that moment, was relatively to the little being whose voice was soon to be heard no more.

So true is that often quoted sentence of La Rochefoucault “that the things we most desire, are rarely realised; or if they occur, it is at a moment when they have lost their power to please.”—The presence so earnestly sighed for at Radensford was now valueless;—though

In that last moment of expiring day,  
While summer's twilight wept itself away,  
They should have felt the softness of the hour  
Sink in the heart, as dew along the flower,  
And gently'shar'd that calm, so still, so deep  
The voiceless thought, which would not speak, but  
weep,—

the anxious grief that harassed the feelings of both rendered them nothing to each other.

It was soon time for the unexpected visitor to depart; for Sophy's faithful old attendant,—her attendant from infancy,—was not to be deterred, by the presence of a guest, from obeying the orders of the doctors and removing her darling to bed, ere the night air exercised its injurious influence.

“Bowen,—here is Captain Davenport. You remember Marcus, at Calcutta—don't you, Bowen?—Marcus—don't you remember dear old Bowen,—whom you used to plague' so about her Norwich shawl?”

Marcus tried to remember. But there was no need for any effort of memory on the part of the old nurse. The Captain had officiated, as proxy for her grandfather, at Miss Sophia's christening; and his generosity on the occasion had made an indelible impression.

“To be sure, she remembered Captain Davenport, and she hoped she saw him well. Only he mustn't keep Miss Burton from going

to rest at her usual hour; 'cause that was out of all rule and reg'lation."

Marcus instantly rose to depart. But after taking leave of Mrs. Burton, he was gently called back by little Sophy.

"You must come to-morrow,—early to-morrow, *very early* to-morrow, please," said she. "Perhaps I may feel stronger, and able to talk. For I want so much to chat to you about India,—and about Amy,—and about—about everything.—It makes me feel better to hear your voice again."

It will be readily believed that Marcus was not slow to make the engagement.—At the earliest hour named by Mrs. Burton as suitable for the interview after the invalid had taken her midday *siesta*, he was at the villa.—But since they parted the night before, all his thoughts had been with *them*. His chief desire had been to procure for the child some gift that would remind her of her baby days, when he was the fountain-head of her childish delights.

That Luck with which he had formerly boasted to be on the best of terms, favoured his wishes.—While lounging betimes in the port, on his return from his morning bath, Marcus discovered on the forecastle of a felucca just arrived from Tangiers, a sailor having on his shoulder one of the most beautiful of foreign birds; a King-bird of Africa, tamed as only sailors know how to tame; and after a very short parley, the beautiful creature was pluming its scarlet wings on the sleeve of a new master.—Gentle, brilliant, and playful, it was the very pet for an ailing child.

So thought little Sophy, when in the course of the afternoon, it took its perch upon the edge of her couch; sidling and fondling with a grace which brought to her memory, as to that of the donor, poor Cocotte, with her cry of “Marcus, Marcus.” But when the bird crept onward to the sick child’s pillow, the contrast between its vivid plumage of scarlet and purple, and the deathly hue of the sweet face that was



smiling on its movements, forced a painful perception upon his mind.—There was little life remaining in that attenuated frame.

There was enough, however, to take delight in his company. The startle of his unexpected arrival had roused the child. He reminded her of the time when, wilful and wayward, she would allow no one but himself to carry her on some Punjaub expedition. And, pleased with the idea, she insisted that he should again be her bearer; should take her across the lawn to look down upon the glaciis. Or into the adjoining saloon; which was adorned with rich cornices said to be pillaged from the ancient Palace of the Knights.

“ I am not very heavy,—not much heavier, Marcus, than when you used to be so kind and indulgent to me, in old times. But it is because I am dying,” she whispered, raising her head to his ear, when she found herself alone with him, under the awning on the lawn. “ Dear mamma fancies I do not know what makes her sit crying, in the dark, every evening,

—as she was when your coming surprised us so pleasantly last night.—But I often overhear the doctors, when they think me asleep.—And I know that it will shortly be over here, Marcus:—that I shall soon feel no more pain,—no more struggle for breath.—I shall be in Heaven. There is no need to cry for me.—If I could only take her with me!—But she will be so lonely when I am gone,—so very, *very* lonely. You must write to Amy Meadows, and beg her from me to be very loving and attentive to my dear dear mother, when she has lost her little girl.”

Mark Davenport, like most selfish people, was by no means fond of children. It has been already admitted that the prospect of becoming a stepfather had been one of the causes that originally estranged him from Rachel Burton; and that the portraits of Ned and Frank in Mary Hargood’s sketch-book, nearly effected a similar disenchantment. But while listening to the languid prattle of poor little Sophy, the child who through six years of

estrangement had been so true to him, he felt that he would willingly sacrifice half his fortune to restore her to health.

Mrs. Burton saw and heard nothing. Grief had blinded her eyes to all but a single object. But old Mrs. Bowen was touched to the heart by the tenderness with which that stern and manly-looking soldier tended her nursling. "To be sure, the Captain was like a brother to Miss Burton's papa," she had always heard. "And now, he was like more than a father to the child."

While these sad scenes were proceeding on the shores of the Mediterranean, the banks of the Thames were resounding with their usual summer pastimes. Those days "woven of silk and gold," which constitute the brightest part of the London season, with its *déjeuners*, races, water-parties, and reviews, were anxiously counted over by Lord Davenport, like a boy notching off the days till the holidays. For about the middle of July, when the most important of his parliamentary duties should

be brought to a close, he was to receive at the altar of St. Margaret's Church, the hand so eagerly coveted.

All, meanwhile, was proceeding smoothly. The *trousseau*, a well-selected and costly gift to Mary from her future mother-in-law, was already brought home; and scarcely a day but placed upon her table some pleasant *cadeau* from the bridegroom.—Wants, hitherto undreamed of, were forestalled; and of many of the rich and tasteful objects heaped upon her, she was literally obliged to inquire the use.—Readily, however, did she adopt every suggestion and every offering. She felt that it was her duty to be guided by Lady Davenport in all that could conduce to the credit of the family, or satisfaction of her husband.

She did not spoil him, however. She still continued to assert, when occasion needed, opinions of her own.

“A pretty *imbroglio* we have all made of it!” said she, when he entered the studio,—no longer a house of bondage,—some days after

Mr. Drewe's letter had been forwarded to Radensford.—“I have heard from Amy—”

“Who does not, I hope, write about an ‘imbroglio?’”

“I will call it *mull*, if you prefer slang to Italian. But in plain English, she accepts.”

“Accepts Hamilton Drewe?—Impossible! I can't and won't believe it.”

“Then you are very unreasonable. Did you not tell me, a few days ago, that my cousin had shown herself absurdly haughty in refusing Mr. Eustace; that, like Rosalind, she ought to ‘down on her knees, and thank Heaven fasting for a good man's love?’”

“But not such a man as Hamilton Drewe—No, no! Marcus may bestow Cocotte upon our gentle shepherd. But I cannot think of throwing away upon him my favourite cousin. Why, your wicker lay-figure, Mary, has more brains and substance in it, than Drewe.”

“My wicker lay-figure has not laid at Amy's feet six thousand, a-year and a fine old seat in Northumberland.”



“ Fie, Mary, fie !”

“ Did you not throw some such advantages into the balance, when extolling the merits of William Eustace ?—Amy is, as you then observed, all but friendless.”

“ But when I tell you that Eustace is as much attached to her as ever ;—that he has never swerved from his desire to make her his wife ?—”

“ Ay,—but you never told *her* so. And how was she to surmise it ?—It would have been great presumption on my cousin’s part, to fancy that a man like your friend Mr. Eustace, apparently engrossed by his public duties, surrounded by the more important calls and claims of parliamentary business, was secretly cherishing a little flickering invisible flame for a poor girl, moping in country obscurity !—I think she was perfectly right to accept Mr. Drewe ;—a well-educated, enlightened man,—whom she will fashion as she likes, and convert into a reasonable being.”

“ Oh ! Mary, Mary !”

“ I have just written her *my* consent in form. And it only remains for you to convey the good news to your friend Mr. Drewe.”

“ My *friend* Mr. Drewe !—At most, an acquaintance of Marcus, and an object of ridicule even to *him*.”

“ Many highly meritorious people are the objects of fashionable sarcasm.”

“ Dear Mary ! You are really too provoking !” cried Lord Davenport ; “ for you *must* be aware how much this vexatious business grieves and disappoints me !—I have been buoying up poor Eustace with such false hopes.”

“ *That* was wrong and imprudent.—But with half the qualities and qualifications you vaunted so highly the other day, ‘ poor Eustace’ will have no difficulty in providing himself with some charming wife.”

“ No wife is charming but the one on whom one has set one’s heart !” cried he.—“ I scarcely know how I shall find courage to break to him this unfortunate business !”

“If you wish it, I will undertake the task. Having never encouraged his irresolutions, I have no scruples of conscience.—Let me write or speak to him.”

“No!—for you do not sympathise with him so kindly as you ought.”

“Why ought I?—You have both been conspiring against Amy;—hoping to render her sufficiently mortified and miserable, to jump at last at Mr. Eustace’s proposals.”

“You do not state the case fairly. All I have done has been for her good.”

“Ay, as my father used to tell poor Ned, while caning him; or Frank, when kept dinnerless and supperless, till too much exhausted to eat!”

“And, after all, to throw herself away on that egregious gander!—”

“I have always heard him spoken of as a very amiable man,” said Mary, provokingly.

“And will that suffice *pour tout potage*?”

“*Hugh!*” interrupted Mary, with uplifted finger.

“I apologise. Will that suffice for a beautiful, excellent, accomplished, well-born girl,—with a very good prospect of a fortune of two thousand a-year?”

“Make it ten, while you are about it: for as it can be only derived from a fairy godmother, a few millions more or less are not worth considering.”

“The fairy godmother is myself. The other day, during my visit to Radensford,—(an additional proof of the truth of the old saw that there is a soul of goodness in things evil—for poor Frank’s disaster may be the ultimate means of restoring his cousin to her estate)—when left alone with Mr. Henderson after dinner, we began to talk of Sir Mark’s singular oversight and carelessness;—of the chance which had let Sir Jervis Meadows into the secret;—and altogether, the law and equity of the case.—I then ascertained, to my amazement, that the executors had given up the cause on the opinion of a single counsel. Neither of them appears to be much of a man

of business ; and their country attorneys, the Prestons, terrified them with their sketch of the cost and trouble of a plea in Chancery, as likely to involve themselves and their heirs for ever, in litigation and ruin."

"And so they surrendered poor Amy's inheritance to the heir-at-law, without striking a blow in her defence !"

"Even Mr. Henderson admitted that he sometimes thought they had been a little hasty,—that they had taken things too much upon trust. But he assured me that it was Dr. Burnaby who, from the first, as residing within call of the lawyers at Cardington, had undertaken the part of acting executor in liquidating Sir Mark Meadows's estate."

"And to Dr. Burnaby, I am certain, you repaired—"

"To Dr. Burnaby and the Prestons. Of course, they scouted the idea of stirring up a question so completely settled ;—the heir-at-law in possession,—all claim from the female line withdrawn.—But I chose to obtain further



information ; and in my capacity of *prochain ami*—no, don't stop me,—Norman French is good Law English—(to the shame of the British Constitution be it spoken !) in my capacity of nearest friend to the infant, then,—for Amy is still only twenty,—I required copies of the title-deeds they had surrendered, and the information they had taken of the Steward of the Manor of Radensford ; the rolls of which, it appears, they had never personally examined. All these, on my return to town, I placed in the hands of my own excellent solicitor, to draw out a case for counsel's opinion."

"And you never told me a syllable about the matter !"

"On my return from Radensford, darling, had I not pleasanter things to think of?—Amy may consider herself lucky that I did not make a bonfire of her family-papers, in my joy at being accepted by her cousin."

"But why never acquaint me, since, that you were stirring so kindly in her behalf?"

“Because I was afraid of raising false expectations.—Till I obtained an opinion in some degree favourable, I would not agitate even *you* on the subject. Even now, that I have received the most satisfactory confirmation of my favourable view of the case, I entreat you, dearest, to refrain from a single word to Amy or my aunt, till all is perfectly authenticated.”

“You may trust me,” replied Mary, giving him her hand, as her act and deed, on which he was not slow to impress a suitable seal.

“But what signifies all this *now*?” cried Lord Davenport, with sudden recollection. “It was delightful to think that, in becoming the wife of William Eustace, she would only legalise his occupancy of the home of his choice.—But the idea of that skipjack, Hamilton Drewe, presiding as lord and master in the venerable family mansion;—stringing rhymes in the old hall,—and substituting orgeat and iced coffee for the manly potations of poor old Sir Mark!”—

“ Well, well!—Since it seems that you have been doing good in secret, and are really a friend to Amy, I must forgive what I considered your trifling with her, of late, in the matter of Mr. Eustace’s attachment, and put you out of your pain. Here is her letter,” continued Mary, taking one from her desk, “ which you must take care to forward to the devoted sonneteer. — But you had better provide yourself at the same time with a bottle of hartshorn, or, as more appropriate to a poet’s nature,—with a goose-quill to burn :—for his suit is decidedly rejected.”

“ Thank Heaven!—I am relieved beyond measure. But what shall I say to *you*, or what shall I do to you, little traitress, to punish you for having so abominably tormented me ?”

“ *A trompeur, trompeur et demi !*” cried Mary.—“ And take it this time in French, for I have nothing else to offer you.—As you chose to keep me so long in the dark, and deceive me concerning Mr. Eustace’s intentions,

half an hour's uncertainty respecting those of Amy Meadows, is a very lenient punishment.—And lo ! I fling aside my black cap of condemnation.”

## CHAPTER XII.

So afflicting, because so accurate, was the news that reached Radensford Rectory by each succeeding mail, that Lady Meadowes was fully prepared for the return, at any moment, of Mrs. Burton; bringing with her all that was mortal of her idolised child. After this sad event, her continued presence at the Rectory would be only a constraint upon Mr. Henderson and his daughter.

The old Rector dearly loved his little grandchild. But he had long given her up as lost to



this world ; and at his age, the approaching separation was not of much account. Another home, he knew, was prepared for both ; and the deep sorrow often perceptible in the mild blue eyes, whose benevolent expression still beamed from amidst his long white hair and snowy eyebrows, arose simply from compassion for the mother about to be doubly bereaved.

“ Promise to be as kind to poor Rachel when we have both forsaken her,” he once said to Lady Meadowes, “ as you have been during our lifetime ; and I shall feel less reluctant to leave her alone in the world.”

Conscious that her visit to the neighbourhood was drawing to a close, Amy reproached herself with having postponed the completion of the drawing that was to redeem her promise to the good old doctor ; and, one fine morning at the beginning of July, accompanied by the Rectory weeding boy to carry her camp-stool and box of materials, and escorted by little Sophy’s asthmatic old spaniel, a former

gift from Captain Davenport, which, ever since the poor child's departure had become her constant companion, Miss Meadowes set off for the forest; where, from the clump of oaks commanding a view of the shady pool where the water-lilies were now in exuberant blossom, she had already sketched her landscape.

The morning was clear and beautiful, and the verdure, refreshed by the sparkling of a summer shower late in the night, looked bright as spring; so that Amy's paint-box seemed scarcely equal to delineate its vivid hues.—She had often before been baffled in her attempts to colour after nature, in the open face of day. Never so much so, as that morning —Perhaps because, notwithstanding the brightness of the season and the scene, the heart within her was as dull as Rosalind's, when *she* too found in her wanderings in the forest, that she had not “a word to throw at a dog.”

Lady Meadowes had that morning announced to her an impending family arrangement, if possible more unsatisfactory than to become

Mrs. Hamilton Drewe, and the rival of the tuneful Nine.—She had settled it with her brother that since, on Mary's marriage, he was to give up his present dreary home and engage a small house nearer to his office, they had better form but a single household; which their united income of a thousand a-year, might render advantageous to both.

Now between the cheerful, lightsome, easy temper of Amy, and the ratiocinaceous manhood of her Uncle Hargood, there existed as utter an incompatibility as between liberal and conservative, or fire and water. Far rather become a national school-mistress, or a sewer of shirt-seams, or any other species of female white slave, than submit to the thraldom of being tyrannised over by so harsh a monster.—There was not a grain of fellow-feeling between them.

It was already settled that she and her mother were to spend the autumn at Ilford, with Lady Davenport; the newly-married couple being bound for Italy, where Hugh was looking forward to the delightful task of introducing

to the classical scenery and noble galleries which he had viewed with so little interest when under the documentation of his travelling tutor, the highly-gifted being whose inspirations would intellectualise his mind, while her liveliness gladdened his heart.

But *after* the autumn—*after* the winter which was to unite the whole family under the roof of Ilford Castle,—what was to become of her, then ; if exposed to perpetual lectures and the unpleasant spectacle of the overbearing despotism exercised over her mother by the Cato of Soho?—Lady Meadows would be routed out of all those indolent habits which had become second nature to her. Her health would probably suffer. But what remonstrance of *hers* was likely to prevail against the iron will and grating voice of Uncle Hargood ?

Like the lovely Lady Christabel, “she drew in her breath with a hissing sound” at the thought !

Just then, a suppressed yelp from Dotty the old spaniel, who was sniffing about at a

distance in pursuit of the shrew-mice abounding on the spot, caused her to look up; and lo! old Sting, bounding amidst the fern, and a stranger approaching her along the path from Meadowes Court. Her breath grew nearly as short as Dotty's: for she saw in a moment that, though wonderfully changed by the lapse of nearly two years since they parted, it was none other than William Eustace.

His step was no longer the lounging stride of the *blasé* London man, but firm and elastic. His countenance was no longer that of the supercilious exquisite of Barfont Abbey, but manly and intelligent. You were prepared by his exterior to find that he could at length utter six consecutive sentences without pronouncing the words "bosh," or "bore."

Amy, however, was prepared for nothing, except to let the greater part of her drawing materials fall in confusion to the ground, as he drew near. — Her hand had been taken and shaken, and she had answered several inquiries concerning the health of Lady Meadowes, before



the tumultuous beating of her heart allowed her to understand very exactly what she was about.

It is probable that Mr. Eustace,—if anything of Billy Eustace remained in him,—was not altogether dissatisfied with the embarrassment his arrival seemed to create.

“You are here to draw, or paint,” said he,—patting down the yelping Dotty, who alone seemed to resent his intrusion,—“and I am interrupting your occupation. I understand from Davenport that you have profited much, since I last saw your performances, by the instructions of my friend Mark.”

The observation was accidental; but Amy, conscious how large a share the then unknown Mark had exercised in her girlish rejection of the suit of the individual now addressing her, felt half disposed to resent it.

“I have finished my work for this morning,” said she. “The sun is getting too high for me.” And as she held out to dry in the sunshine the landscape she was desirous of replacing in her portfolio, it was impossible for her com-

panion not to commend its highly artistic execution.

He took it at once into his hand, as if to compare it with the points of scenery it purported to concentrate ; perhaps in order to afford a little breathing time to his agitated companion.

She would have given worlds to recover her composure. She would have given worlds to command her voice.—But in spite of herself, her colour went and came, and her hands trembled so violently that she could not untie the strings of the portfolio to receive the drawing. When she finally thanked Mr. Eustace for his assistance, it might just as well have been any other person who addressed him.

“ You seem almost afraid of me, Miss Meadows !” said he, perceiving that her henchman in the smockfrock was out of hearing, and that even Dotty had forsaken them in the henchman’s favour.—“ And how can I wonder, when I recal to mind my detestable, my most ungentlemanly conduct at our last meeting !—It scarcely becomes me to say by what deep, deep

repentance and regret it has been atoned.—But if I could dare to hope that such an assurance might effect a single step towards obtaining your forgiveness —”

“ You have long been thoroughly forgiven,” faltered Amy, more and more confused.—And how she longed, at that moment, for the power of expressing graciously, but not *too* graciously, that perhaps her own conduct on that occasion might require a little indulgence.

The shrewd Goldoni has observed that there are occasions when a good tongue is of ten times more value than a good head. Miss Meadows’s tongue refused altogether to obey her word of command. It was indeed an unruly member.

The lubberly boy whom Hamilton Drewe would probably have called his “ little foot page,” was now summoned and charged with her “impedimenta;” having taken possession of which, he started off at a postman’s pace towards the village: conceiving that his attendance could

not be wanted when such a fine young gentleman was on the spot, to take charge of Dotty and his young lady.

To Amy, this was somewhat annoying ; for it seemed to impose on her companion the necessity of escorting her home. But again, the *langue bien pendue*, whose fluency she envied, came to his aid.

“ I am on my way to the manor-house,” said he, “ to convey some orders from my Aunt Warneford. If I am not unreasonably intruding, perhaps you will allow me the honour of accompanying you as far as the village.”

“ Lady Harriet is not coming then, at present ?” inquired Amy, after an awkward bow of acquiescence.

“ No ! She has all but established herself at Brighton.—Some pill-monger, who has obtained her ear (no difficult question where her grandchildren are in question !) has persuaded her that sea-air is essential to the boys ; and she has consequently placed them at one of those dread-

ful nurseries for puny little lords, which send so many miserable starvelings to rough it afterwards at Harrow or Eton——”

“And Lady Harriet is living at Brighton to be near them?——”

“Say rather to preclude the last chance of their being properly and wholesomely disciplined. The fate of this poor little child of Mrs. Burton’s, seems to have alarmed her.”

“But the Warnefords are healthy boys,—the very opposite of poor dear, delicate, little Sophia!”

“Who can account for the vagaries of excessive affection!—Those who have seen the all but last idol of their lives broken before their eyes, must be pardoned for clinging, a little unreasonably, to what remains to them.”

Amy silently applauded the sentiment; though it was one that the Billy Eustace of former times would probably have pronounced “bosh.”

“I fear,” said she, nervously, “by the manner of your allusion to little Sophy, that you have heard further ill-news respecting her?”

“The very worst.—Her dissolution, hourly



expected when the last packet left Malta, *must* by this time have taken place."

"Poor, dear child! — I have known and loved her for so many years," said Amy, her eyes filling with tears, "that I cannot reconcile myself to the idea of never seeing her again."

"Marcus writes word that she is perfectly resigned:—fully aware of what awaits her,—but perfectly resigned."

"*Marcus*? Do you allude to my *Cousin* Mark?—How should he know anything of her state?"—

"Are you not aware," rejoined Eustace, and his conscious companion fancied that there was malice in his eye and intonation, as he spoke,—“that Captain Davenport followed Mrs. Burton to Malta, and is now most fortunately on the spot to act for them both?”

Marcus!—Only six months before, prepared to sacrifice body and soul for love of Mary Hargood; and now, once more at the feet of his once-loved Rachel! “Oh! Marcus, Marcus!”

“No,” she replied, firmly, “I knew nothing

of it. When I left home, the Davenports were still uneasy concerning my cousin, and anxious for his return to his parliamentary duties.—Olivia, who constantly writes to me, has never mentioned his being at Malta.”

“The circumstance has only lately transpired.” He did not think it necessary to add that it was not without its share in his own hurried journey to Meadows Court.

“Will it be better, do you think,” added Amy, “to mention it to Mr. Henderson?—To my mother, of course.—From her, I have no concealments. But it seems possible that—” she paused.

“That *what*?”—

“That he might almost prefer Mrs. Burton being alone with her dying child.”

“And why?” persisted the pitiless Eustace, who, though he perfectly understood her meaning, chose to make her explain herself. She ought to be made to tell what danger she apprehended from the presence of this irresistible Mark.

But Amy was as brave as he was cruel ; and disappointed him by speaking out. High-minded people gather courage from persecution.

“Because in former times, Marcus was known, it seems, to entertain a strong attachment for Mrs. Burton : and the present moment is scarcely the one for renewing his attentions.”

“I cannot agree with you, my dear Miss Meadowes. — Unhappy and friendless in a strange country, what time could be more auspicious for his devoting himself to her service?—Even my aunt, with her over-strict notions of propriety, was overjoyed at hearing that poor Mrs. Burton, for whom she has the sincerest regard and compassion, had so devoted a protector at hand.”

“In that case, we will at once mention it to Mr. Henderson,” said Amy.

And how in his heart did he thank her for the “we” which, even for so trifling a measure, served to unite their names and wills in one.

“You have seen a great deal of the Daven-

ports lately?" said Amy, gathering courage from his silence.

"A great deal.—As you may suppose, *I* can never see too much of them." And there was an unmistakeable emphasis on the personal pronoun.

"Olivia is an excellent correspondent," added Miss Meadows. "She often mentions you in her letters."

"Yes, darling child!—She is kindness and good-nature personified!—And so happy just now.—It is like a gleam of sunshine to see her smiling face."

Amy would have given half that she possessed,—little enough, as she imagined,—for courage to offer him her congratulations.—But Sisyphus might as well have pretended to play at ball with his stone, as Amy to pronounce the word marriage that hovered on her lips.

They had now emerged from the last thicket of the forest, where the haws were beginning to redden on the fine old thorns. They had

reached the meadows ; and had no great distance before them, in the ferny path skirting the hedgerows of the pastures still dividing them from Radensford. The old grey tower of the church was already visible between the ash-trees of the screen sheltering the Rectory. —Yet still, neither had really spoken to each other. That is, neither had uttered a single syllable of what lay nearest their hearts.—For all the vaunted eloquence of William Eustace, on one point, he was tongue-tied !

As they approached the Rectory, both were equally startled by perceiving that, at the door stood a posting-carriage, with a pair of smoking horses.—The same idea presented itself to both.—News,—bad news—from Malta.

In that case, days, and even weeks might elapse, before such another opportunity presented itself to Mr. Eustace as the one he had so memorably neglected ! On the spur of his apprehensions, he suddenly entreated Miss Meadowes to grant him five minutes' conversation before she entered the house.



They had fortunately just reached a screen of fine ash-trees, planted by the old Rector, some ten years before his daughter saw the light, to shelter the house from the north and east; to which, in honour of their growth, he had within the last six months assigned the air of a double avenue, by a gravel-walk in the centre, rendering available, at all seasons, their pleasant shade. To a sheltered seat, placed in the further extremity, Amy now led the way; for she was forewarned by the beating of her heart that the five minutes requested, would pass less agreeably in presence of a postboy and pair, than in that of linnets and chaffinches.

*One* minute of the five sufficed to convince her that her surmises were just.—Of what passed during the remaining four, she was not very accurately conscious. William Eustace had probably inquired with some degree of unction into his chances of success, if he presumed to renew the suit she had formerly rejected. For when the mist cleared from her eyes, and the confusion from her ears, she

found herself thanked again and again, and again and again addressed as a more than angel; not in the polyglot lingo of Hamilton Drewe, but in the plainest English that ever managed to express "I love you. Deign to become my wife."

Poor Amy, however, was not so thoroughly overcome as to be indifferent to the injury which the fickleness of her adorer was inflicting upon her Cousin Olivia.

"You cannot,—no, surely you cannot have been so ready to think ill of me as to imagine that, having once loved and appreciated a being like yourself, I could be enthralled by the attractions of a mere child?" said he, in answer to her prompt accusations.

"But the whole family,—the whole world,—was equally deceived."

"The whole world perhaps,—for it will swallow nearly its own bulk in fabrications.—But believe me the family was from the very first aware of the nature of my views and feelings. Inquire of Lord Davenport, and

he will tell you how early in our intimacy I confided to him the state of my heart."

Amy made no reply. She was perhaps occupied in adding up the amount of sleepless nights from which her Cousin Hugh might have rescued her, had he chosen to be a little more communicative.

Her reply, meanwhile, was of a nature to restore as much peace of mind to Mr. Eustace as he had been instrumental in conferring on herself. For the ensuing five minutes, in addition to those originally demanded, no two persons on earth could be more exquisitely happy than the pair who had severally overcome so strong a prejudice, in order to arrive at a due appreciation of each other's merits.

As they were now resting in the shady arbour-seat which occupied the angle of the avenue, old Sting seized the opportunity to renew to the daughter of his kind master his rough caresses of former years,—considerably to the detriment of Amy's muslin dress.

"No, poor fellow! let him alone," she said

to the happy man who wished to disencumber her of the heavy paws that rested on her knees. "You are more indebted to Sting for my good opinion than you are at all aware of. The feelings I have just avowed in your favour date, I am sadly afraid, from the moment of seeing him installed in his old place on the door-mat at Meadowes Court!—I could not believe *that* act of kindness to be altogether a tribute to Olivia Davenport. I could not help even fancying that poor Amy had some little share in your goodness to the Manestys, and Blanche and Sting. I began by being grateful. How it all ended, you have already forced me to confess."

The arguments used by William Eustace in reply, it is by no means necessary to transcribe. If his sentiments were not clothed in those well-rounded periods for which his parliamentary eloquence was already attaining considerable renown, they were all that was desired by his companion; and would probably have been extended with a diffuseness which, from the House, might have elicited cries of "Question,

question!" (albeit the momentous question was now both asked and answered,) but for the anxieties on account of Mrs. Burton, which by degrees over-mastered even the satisfaction of the happy Amy.

"Wait for me here," said she, "and I will bring you as soon as I can, the tidings, good or bad, conveyed by yonder messenger."

Before he could assent or dissent, she was off like a bird into the house.

Bad indeed was the news ;— though scarcely worse than the previous anticipations of the family. — Captain Davenport himself was the messenger ; having landed at Southampton the previous day, in a steamer especially chartered to bring back to England the remains of Mrs. Burton's idolised child, to be interred in Radensford church by the side of her own mother.

He was come to prepare Mr. Henderson for the commencement of the necessary arrangements. What more he came to announce to the good Rector, he confided at present only to Lady Meadows. For so completely was the



kindly affectioned man overcome by the confirmation of his sinister presentiments concerning the darling of his old age, that Marcus had not courage to accost him, at such a moment, with a love-story.

He was to return instantly to Southampton; and accompany back into Gloucestershire all that remained to poor Rachel of her lost treasure. In the interim, "the kindest of aunts" was to seize some favourable moment for enlightening the inhabitants of the Rectory as to the part he was in future to assume in the family.

It is to be hoped, nay, it is easy to be believed, that this single-minded woman, so much more in awe of the rebukes of her own conscience than of those of Public Opinion, would fulfil her mission in a better spirit than was exercised by another "kindest of aunts," when she undertook to diplomatise at Meadows Court in behalf of William Eustace!

## CHAPTER XIII.

SUCH was the state of affairs between Lady Meadows and her nephew Marcus, when the return of Amy, apparently from her sketching expedition, relieved her mother from the necessity of doing the honours of the luncheon table to one who, after his melancholy night journey, stood much in need of refreshment.

But when she had departed on her errand of mercy, to offer such scanty comfort as affectionate friendship could afford to the afflicted old Rector, an explanation took place between the

cousins which her presence might have in some degree impeded. Marcus, whose feelings were never of a very ethereal nature, did not hesitate to inform Amy, while he ate his cold lamb and drank his pale ale, that, though at present her heartbroken friend was unable to detach a thought or feeling from the loss of her beloved child, he had reason to hope that, at no distant period, Rachel Burton would seek in "a happy marriage," consolation for her heartrending loss.

In as few words as possible,—a stenographic edition of the eloquence of the M.P. "couched" like Beatrice, "in the woodbine coverture,"—he stated how greatly his care and attention had assisted to alleviate the sufferings of both mother and child. And Amy could well believe his assertion that, but for his devotion to them, the helpless position of Mrs. Burton alone, in a foreign colony, would have been indeed hard to endure.

"But what is to become of you, Cousin Mark," inquired Miss Meadowes, "when poor

Rachel is installed here with her father? You can scarcely become at once the inmate of Mr. Henderson, to whom you are at present a stranger?"

Captain Davenport looked more puzzled than pleased.—Apparently, the dilemma had not before presented itself to his imagination. John Gilpin may have been satisfied that "his *wife* should dine at Edmonton, and *he* should dine at Ware :"—but lovers are less patient.—Daily interviews, if not daily dinners eaten in common, seem indispensable as a prelude to connubial happiness.

"Because," persisted Amy, in pity to his sorrowful countenance, "I think I can venture to offer you the hospitalities of a house in this neighbourhood."

"Not Lady Harriet Warneford's I hope! That stiff-necked Pharisee is one of my abominations."

"Of a house in this neighbourhood," continued his cousin, "where, happy as I once

was as Amy Meadowes, I mean some day to be happier as—”

“Amy Eustace!—I knew it—I guessed it—That charming old Meadowes Court.—How long, Amy, has it all been arranged?”

“Not quite a quarter of an hour. And my dearest mother’s consent has still to be asked. I can, however, prophesy that it will not be *very* reluctantly bestowed!”

“I should think not!” cried Marcus,—who, in the joy of his own happy prospects was in charity with the whole world; and had thoroughly forgiven William Eustace his manifold offences, from the cricket-match at Eton down to his last triumphant speech in the House,—“one of the first men of the day,—one of the best fellows going!—Amy, I heartily wish you joy!”

“And let us keep our own counsel and betray to nobody,” archly rejoined Miss Meadowes, “how often, in the old house at Battersea, we



used to call him a prig and a bore,—Young Vapid,—&c., &c.”

“Hush, hush!” cried Marcus,—full of compunction;—“the man of whom we then spoke was Billy Eustace, the duchess-fancier, not the honourable member for Horndean. As far as I am concerned, I repent, I recant, I apologise.—And when may I apologise in person?”

“The moment you have finished your glass of sherry.—Mr. Eustace is at this moment waiting for me yonder under the ash-trees.”

Marcus snatched up his hat, and was ready in a moment. It seemed as if a new cousin was all that had been wanting to perfect his domestic felicity.—Anybody would have thought so, at least, who could have overheard his fluent congratulations to the heir of Horndean Court. He nearly shook his hands off!—Amazing what gusto is imparted to that truly great British salutation by long absence in foreign parts, where bows and scrapes restrict the politeness of life to heads and feet, instead of dislocating people’s wrists in token of amity.

As happy an understanding was speedily established among the three, as between the sides of a triangle. Before they parted, it was arranged among them that though Lady Meadows might feel it her duty to remain a short time longer at Radensford Rectory, till Rachel and her father could be left to their mutual comforting, Amy might at once complete the satisfaction of the family circle in town, as the inmate of Lady Davenport. She was so much wanted there, by Olivia,—by Mary,—by the happy man who could, no more than Marcus, intrude his raptures into the house of mourning.

In the house of feasting, in Spring Gardens, meanwhile, all went well.—Lady Davenport had gained another daughter in the dear Mary, so clear-headed, so right-minded, so affectionate, now that a key of kindness had been applied to unlock the rich treasury of her heart.—They were all so happy!—and happiness, like varnish applied to a well-painted picture, brings out such glorious colours!—

When the news reached them from Radensford of the two marriages so desired and so desirable that were about at once to enlarge and concentrate the family connection, so great was the general joy, that the fate of poor little Sophia met with scarcely becoming sympathy. Lord Davenport, indeed, assumed to himself no small share in the honour of having brought about the match of his Cousin Amy.—But whenever Mary saw him disposed to plume himself on his successful machinations, she insisted that his first attempt at manœuvring should be his last. Having discovered, she said, the vile duplicity of his character, it would be painful to be always on her guard against his stratagems.

When at length Amy made her appearance among them, in spite of all her happy prospects deeply saddened by the scenes of affliction she had recently witnessed at Radensford,—it became her turn to be questioned concerning the new sister-in-law to whom, in process of time, they were to be introduced by Marcus.—None

of them had seen her ; and the idea of a middle-aged widow was not altogether attractive. It was a relief indeed to learn that the Rachel they were required to love, was younger than Marcus, gentle, pleasing, and possessed of considerable personal attractions ; nor was it an unsatisfactory addition to the list of her merits that, having inherited the property of her child, by law an infant, she was in possession of an income of nearly three thousand pounds.—About five thousand per annum would be the stint of the Paria who, for so many years, had been rebelling against the decrees of Providence.

“Do you remember quarrelling with me, at Battersea,” had been one of his parting observations to his dear cousin Amy, “for telling you that I was on the best possible terms with Luck?—Have I not proved my words?—Am I not one of the most fortunate of mankind?”

“Not more so than your brother Hugh.”

“Why not add not more so than my friend Eustace?”

“Well, then,—not more so than your friend

Eustace!—Heaven has decided for us all, far better than we had chosen for ourselves.—Our own choice,—our own prejudices—if indulged, would have created at least two miserable couples. Whereas, as far as human foresight can be relied on, our chances of happiness are far beyond the common lot.”

“The only person on whose account I feel uneasy and compunctious,” said Lord Davenport, when Miss Meadows reported to his mother, in his presence, this last edition of the ‘*Marcusonian Philosophy*,’ —“is our friend Drewe. Poor fellow!—do you experience no pangs of conscience, Amy, when you reflect on that unfortunate individual; and consider that for the remainder of his days he may be reduced for consolation to his colloquies with Cocotte?”

“On the contrary,” cried Mary, who, the least fickle of the party, had been listening, much amused, to their mutual recriminations.—“You have conferred on him an inestimable benefit.—Already, I foresee in our poor bewildered Master Slender, a lyrist of the first magnitude. ‘*Don-*



*nez moi de l'indignation et de la misère,' says Gozlan, 'et je vous rendrai des poètes. L'Insomnie fait chercher.'* Hamilton Drewe will emerge from the gulf of milk of roses, into which he has probably plunged with a view to committing suicide, a rival of Tennyson and Longfellow!—I look forward, Amy, to your becoming the fair Geraldine, or Leonora d'Este, or Beatrice, of Drewe of the Lovelocks."

"On the contrary, if we can only persuade him to make firewood of his laurels," said Lord Davenport, (who, not having been admitted like his brother to a view of a certain album containing sketches of 'The Lady of Avon,' and other striking lyrics, had less sympathy perhaps than is their due with the Guild of Ballad-mongers), "and descend from the clouds to *terra firma* and become a rational being, some five years hence, he would make the very husband for Olivia. Drewe is an excellent creature; and his good old Northumbrian Manor House of Birken Tower is only forty miles from Ilford. Think of the happiness of dear old Winkelried,

if her darling pupil should marry a poet, and that *rara avis*, a rich poet, at last."

The *employé* of the Treasury, meanwhile, was beginning to find elbow-room in his new suit; and, more at ease with himself, became far pleasanter company to other people.—Immediately after his instalment in his new duties, an official crisis happened to arise from a harassing motion in Parliament, requiring not only the utmost zeal and industry in his department to enable Government to meet an important discussion, but a degree of general historical knowledge rarely found among the marrers of Treasury pens, and the blurrers of Treasury blotting-paper,—the aid of Edward Hargood, unpretending and spontaneous, proved of sterling value, and brought him frequently into communication with the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

At a ministerial squeeze some weeks afterwards, Lord Davenport was taken aside with solemn mystery, and thanked as the means of having secured to Government a highly valuable

assistant:—the noble Earl, thus grateful, probably feeling that he could not have afforded to be half so well served by a man of greater pretensions and a more exacting position, than the nameless clerk.

But the tribute rendered to his merits imparted new life to Edward Hargood.—His pride was relieved from an insupportable burthen.—He was no longer the creature of patronage. He was rendering back money's worth for money.

Under this conviction, he approached the house in Spring Gardens with a stouter step, and bolder gait.—A little more, and his deportment might have attained, perhaps, an objectionable touch of Malvolio.—At present, he was a man who bore his part in conversation with the highest credit at Lord Davenport's table: and it seldom happened, after one of the dinner parties now of almost daily occurrence, that some man of mark did not request the favour of being presented to the able stranger, whose information appeared so general; even before it

transpired that he was on the eve of becoming father-in-law to their host.

One evening, the party being limited to the family, they were admiring a gorgeous present of emeralds despatched to the bride by that sister of the late Lord Davenport, whose tardy marriage had been supposed to overcloud the early destinies of her nephew Mark.

“All this is very gratifying,—very pleasant, Mary,” said he to the daughter, who was, as usual, required to exhibit these splendid jewels in her beautiful hair. “But what is your father to give you for a wedding present?—Silver and gold have I none—”

“You have something, my dear Mr. Hargood,” interrupted Lord Davenport, “which Mary has been sadly wanting to ask you for, but has wanted courage —”

“Wanted courage to ask anything of her own *father*?” exclaimed Hargood, preparing to be affronted.—“I should have hoped that she had acquired some experience of my indulgence.”

“But the boon to which Hugh alludes, my

dear father, is so *very* great a concession,”—faltered Mary, the colour rushing to her cheeks with anxiety.

Hargood reflected for a moment; but could bethink him only of the grim portraits of the Rector of Henstead and his wife, his sole family treasures.—Still, if she wished them to figure in the gallery at Ilford Castle, she was welcome.

“We want you to make us a present of the two boys, my dearest father,” whispered Mary, having, meanwhile, so closely approached him as to be able to throw her arm round his neck. “You are now too much occupied to be troubled with them. And it would be doing the greatest kindness to Lord Davenport, and prove the means of keeping him out of worlds of mischief, to afford him something on which to exercise his genius for education.—With his usual self-conceit, dear Hugh fancies himself ‘to the manner born;’ and wants to make a Heber and a Wellington, out of my brothers.”

There was a considerable struggle in the mind of Hargood. He could be insensible neither to



the kind intentions of his daughter and her noble *fiancé*, nor to the advantage likely to accrue to his sons from such an adoption.—But his pride rebelled against such an abdication of paternal authority. How could he possibly renounce the last victims upon whom he was intitled to wreak his wholesome tyrannies !

“ If you would gratify this earnest desire of Mary’s,” added Lord Davenport, “ I should much wish to place our younger boy at Woolwich,—with a view to the highest branch of military service. Of Edward, if you did not object, his sister is bent upon making a rector for Ilford.”

A pretty story truly !—They had literally been carving out the destinies of his children, without a word of reference to his opinion !—Edward Hargood’s heart hardened, and his countenance darkened.

“ We will talk of this another time,” said he, glancing sternly round the room ; though it contained only Olivia and Madame Winkelried,

stitching away at the two extremities of some carpet-work in lambs-wool, as soft and innocent as themselves.—“ Human destinies are objects far too important to be thus frivolously trifled away.”

“ Do not despair, dearest Mary,” said Lord Davenport when her father had taken his majestic departure. “ We will return at some more auspicious moment to the charge. Trust me, I will leave nothing undone or unsaid till I have obtained these young Gracchi as a wedding-present for my Cornelia.”

“ Perhaps, for the present, we had better leave him alone,” replied Miss Hargood. “ My father’s is a mind that may be safely left to its own reflections. It always works itself clear. Unless when his temper, like the irritated Sepia, creates a turbid medium around him, no human being can see clearer. But tell me, Hugh !—What is the meaning of all these voluminous despatches passing daily between you and my Aunt Meadowes ?

— Draughts of marriage settlements for Amy?”

“Not yet,—though when the good time comes, Marcus and I are to be her trustees—”

“And your private conferences with Mr. Eustace?”

“To-morrow, you shall know all. But it is a secret of which others are intitled to the first disclosure.”

“A secret to be kept from one so soon to be your wedded wife? — Beware! — Remember how I punished your last disingenuous manœuvre.”

“I am not afraid. For the *present* mystery involves the happiness and prosperity of Amy and her mother.”

“I see,—I know,—I guess it all,” said Mary, enthusiastically clapping her hands. “A few words have caught my ear, which afford me perfect enlightenment. Meadows Court is about to be restored to them! — Meadows Court is again theirs.”

“It never belonged to any other person,—except in the credulous belief of two very muzzy old gentlemen, misled by blundering country attorneys.—When you make your will, Mary,—if ever you sufficiently mistrust your husband to find such an operation desirable,—see that you choose middle-aged executors;—neither young enough to be flighty, nor old enough to be hoodwinked.”

“I wonder what other possible, or impossible wish one could form,” said Miss Hargood, who had been listening to the promptings of her own heart, rather than to his counsels,—“to perfect the happiness of our family circle!—Almost too many blessings have been showered upon us!—Would Olivia, do you think, like to become a maid of honour, or Hamilton Drewe, poet laureate, or Madame Winkelried almonress to the Queen?”—

“No jesting on such a subject, darling Mary!” whispered Lord Davenport. “For I sometimes fancy that we are almost *too* happy.

—Evil fortune is ever lying in wait for those who do not appreciate, with as much reverence as gratitude, the unmerited favours of Heaven.”—



## CONCLUSION.

“OLD CRUVEY, again, by Jove!” cried one of the Cruxleyans, who was watching for arrivals, at the Club window; which, now that London was beginning to thin at the close of the season, were hailed as a refreshing novelty; “Old Cruvey, dyed to look as good as new; and with a white moss-rose in his button-hole, like a Zephyr in the last ballet.—Where has poor Methuselah been hiding himself?—I never missed him.”

“He goes down into Gloucestershire, every summer, to eat Severn salmon in the original,” replied Lord Curt.

“Rather,” added Ned Barnsley, one of the

amplefiers, "to sponge upon an old brother-in-law; who, being deaf as a post, runs less risk than ourselves of being prosed to death by his lengthsomeness."

"Don't abuse Cruvey;—Cruvey is worth his weight in postage-stamps!" retorted Lord Curt. "Cruvey's memory is a sort of national warehouse, in which everything lost, stolen or strayed, is to be found in bond.—Did you never see the list of articles deposited by honest Cabmen (*mirabile dictu*) at the Inland Office? 'No. 1. a cotton umbrella. No. 2. a lace veil. No. 3. a walking-stick. No. 4. a diamond necklace. No. 5. a pair of gloves. No. 6. a packet of railway debentures.'—Just such a jumble, does a second bottle of claret extract out of the knowledge-box of my friend Cruvey."

"But what the deuce is he talking about?—Do let one listen, Curt."

"Surely, my dear Ned, your ears are long enough for anything?"

"Why not,—since extended by the immense practise you afford them!"

“Here, Cruvey, my good fellow,”—cried the imperturbable Curt, “come this way, and tell us all *that* over again. It sounds good enough for an encore.”

And Cruvey, seldom honoured with an audience by the brilliant founder of the Cruxleyans, recommenced his tune as punctually as a barrel-organ to which a shilling has been thrown from some nursery window.

“The story is many days old,” said he. “I only wonder that—”

“I beg your pardon, my dear Cruvey,—but, before we begin to wonder, is this history a true bill, or a *blague*? For at this oppressive time of year, one can’t afford to believe, then disbelieve, and finally argue matters over.—Give us first your authorities. Under what act of parliament, in what reign?”

“Under favour of my having been resident within a quarter of a mile of the spot where the whole business occurred; and an ear-witness of the greater part of it.”

“A quarter of a mile?—*There*, Ned!”

whispered Lord Curt, aside to Barnsley. "A pair of ears that beat your own by a couple of lengths!"

"My brother-in-law, Admiral Tremenheere; from whose house I returned this morning," gravely recommenced Cruvey,— "resides half-way between Meadows Court and Radensford Rectory; and was summoned as a witness to the formal ejection of Billy Eustace, as tenant of Sir Jervis Meadows; to whom, possession of the estate had been illegally granted by the Steward of the Manor.—Lady Harriet Warneford's grandson, a minor, is *lord* of the Manor (a Court Baron affair!) and, thanks to the irregularity with which the late Colonel allowed the Rolls to be kept, certain deeds executed by Sir Mark Meadows and his father, were missing, when wanted, at his decease.—Lord Davenport's solicitors have however been hunting them up, with care and cost; and lo! they have emerged from the Warneford private deed-chest, instead of having lain safe and mouldering in that of the Barony."

“And the end of it is, that Billy Eustace’s love, that pretty girl with the brown ringlets, retains possession of the estate; and that Billy becomes the tenant of his wife, eh, Cruvey?”

“Precisely—minus the yearly rent.—They are to be married the end of the week; and I left the people at Radensford preparing triumphal arches and bonfires, sufficient to drive any reasonable being out of the country.”

“Ay, true!—Davenport and Billy (*arcades ambo*) are to be turned off, at the same hour from the same drop, at St. Margaret’s, on Saturday next; ‘to be sold in one prime lot,’ as Leifchild would advertise it,”—observed a junior Cruxleyan, whose attempts at wit Lord Curt often endeavoured to nip in the bud:—knowing that there is nothing so injurious to an actor as an inexpert imitator.

“You are, as usual, mistaken, Ned!”—said he. “Even my nephew Halliday could correct your copy.—They are to be married in the Abbey, to afford room for the House of Commons, which is to attend in numerical force, at



the summons of the Black Rod:—besides deputations from the different public charities, at whose dinners Davenport and Eustace have speechified, and a procession of Ragged Schools, Royal Academicians, the Soup Kitchen and the Foundling Hospital.”

“Bosh, my dear Curt, bosh;—the chaff would be better done in an American paper!” retorted Ned Barnsley. “But what was that other piece of news you were telling, just now, Cruvey, about that Bengal Tiger of a brother of Davenport’s; whom one used to see smoking on the doorsteps of the Junior United Service, with a face the colour of the electric ball?”

“Mark Davenport?—Only that he is to be privately married in the country, in a week or two, to a very pretty widow, to whom he has been long attached; who is in the enjoyment of three or four thousand a year—”

“Say it again, and more correctly; a very pretty widow, with three or four thousand a year, to which he has been long attached.”

“The original reading was the authentic one. But no matter. He has managed to get forty shillings in change for his sovereign ; which few of us arrive at.”

“In short, ‘good deeds are beginning to shine in a naughty world ! I wish to badness I could go *in* again, and accomplish a second *débüt*, and new maiden speech !’ said Lord Curt, with pretended peevishness. “I have been all my life too virtuous. But one may have a chance, now that the children of light have become wiser in their generation than the children of this world.”

All these details, though spoken in jest and by professed jesters, were true as truth !—Before Michaelmas had once more reunited for pheasant-shooting the distinguished chatter-boxes of the clubs, the bridal tours of the three happy couples in question, were passed and over ; and Ilford Castle concentrated the united family under its roof.—They were just in time to inaugurate the new village of Iltown ;

which, to the delight of Mark Davenport, has superseded in the parish all memory of even the name of Quag Lane.

But it was at Meadows Court they were to spend the Christmas holidays:—"dear old Meadows Court;" where we found the happy Amy, and where, after her painful probation, we leave her, still happier than before.

To the Dowager Lady Davenport, estranged for thirty years from the home of her childhood, the visit was one of intense gratification; and the more so, that it was paid hand in hand with her excellent sister-in-law; that early friend to whom she was endeavouring to atone for the neglect of years.

Never was there a happier—never a more cheerful family party. The fine talents of Mary, served to embellish and enhance all their pastimes; while the quieter cheerfulness of Mrs. Eustace brightened the fire-side. — She had taken care that her little cousins, Ned and Frank, should accompany her

Uncle Hargood; already so far humanised by independence, or rather competence—as to sanction their introduction to skating, curling, sleighing, nay, even fox-hunting;—all the pleasures of a country winter. Having fortunately assumed to himself the task of assorting and cataloguing the mis-matched old library, which absorbed the whole leisure of his week's holiday, his severe rationality interfered but little with the joys of the junior branches.

Blanche and Sting retained, of course, possession of their post; and Amy's paroquets, bequeathed by her on leaving Radensford to poor little Sophia Burton, were now, alas! restored to their perch: the African bird having taken their place at the Rectory.

Lady Harriet, — whether enlightened or shamed, no matter,—often brought over her little grandsons to play with the young Hargoods, to the mutual benefit of all parties; and good old Doctor Burnaby, though for a long time he kept aloof, self-condemned at having allowed

himself to be humbugged by a Mr. Chubbs Parkis into too hasty a cession of the rights of his ward, was eventually persuaded to forgive himself.

“All the better in the end, perhaps, my dear Mrs. Eustace!” said he, in his first private colloquy with Amy. “Sweet are the uses of adversity: though neither you nor your mother wanted much of that sort of trial to make you perfect angels.—I hear you’ve let off that old militiaman his two years’ arrears of rent?—Preston is furious at it.—But *you* can better spare the money than Sir Jervis.”

And so she could, if all the happiness this world affords, may intitle people to be liberal!

William Eustace, while contemplating the cheerful circle created around him by the extinction of family “Prejudice,”—and the “Progress” of civilisation,—could not help secretly reverting to the prophecy of poor old Sir Mark, on occasion of his first disastrous visit to Meadowes Court. “The day that renders you



conscious of the value of domestic happiness," was the observation of the kindly old man, "will be the best spent day of your life."

And which of that little party did not fully subscribe to his opinion!—

THE END.

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